



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

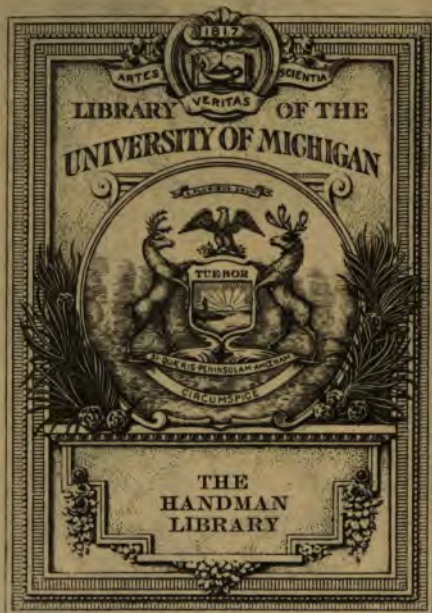
Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

A 713,154

HOW
THE
PEASANT
OWNER
LIVES

LADY
VERNEY

76
3
5



COLLECTED BY
MAX SYLVIVS HANDMAN 1885-1939
PROFESSOR OF ECONOMICS 1931-1939
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN



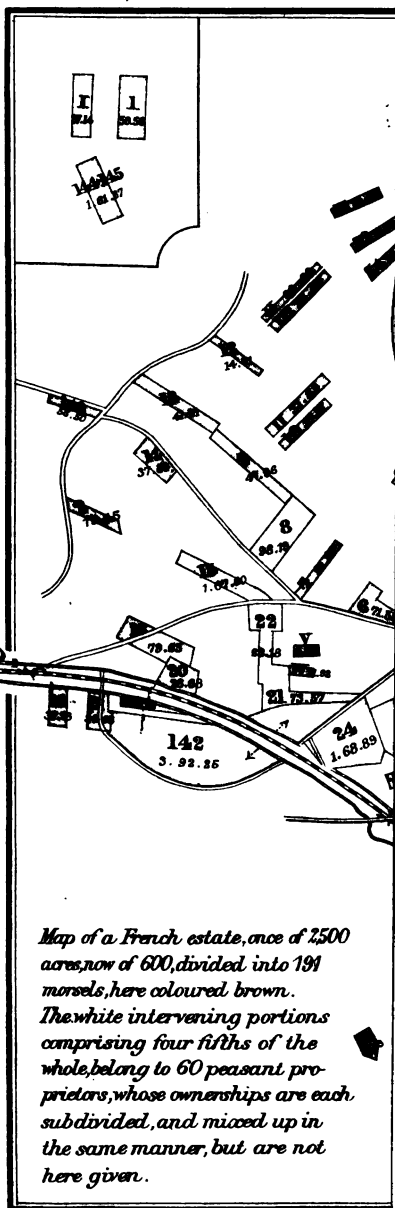
3/4 = 0

cut 75

50
know 4

HOW THE PEASANT OWNER LIVES





Verney, Frances Catherine Nightingale, Esq.

HOW

THE PEASANT OWNER LIVES

IN PARTS OF

FRANCE, GERMANY, ITALY, RUSSIA

BY LADY VERNEY

Handwritten

London

MACMILLAN AND CO.

AND NEW YORK

1888

All rights reserved



Gen. Lib
H. A. L. L. L.
1-31-49
539271

HD
1476
A3
V5

PREFACE

4-8-47 HLC

A COMPARISON between the condition of peasant owners in the principal countries of Europe as given in different official reports lately published is so extremely interesting, that I have collected these papers from the *Nineteenth Century*, etc., as a very small contribution to so large a subject. I have added a fresh paper on the application of the system to Ireland, and have inserted a map of a French estate, to show by the eye the enormous inconveniences inherent in the "pulverisation of the land," and what is almost worse, the scattering of the plots and scraps, over half a commune, even when belonging to the same owner, and the consequent impossibility of carrying out any decent agriculture. This distinctive feature of the *mor-*

cellement is hardly known in England, though abroad it is constantly mentioned as reducing the value of the soil, sometimes as much as by half.

To make a mistake about the question of land in Ireland at this moment would be so disastrous, that all evidence on the subject of small owner-ships in different countries must be important to look into.

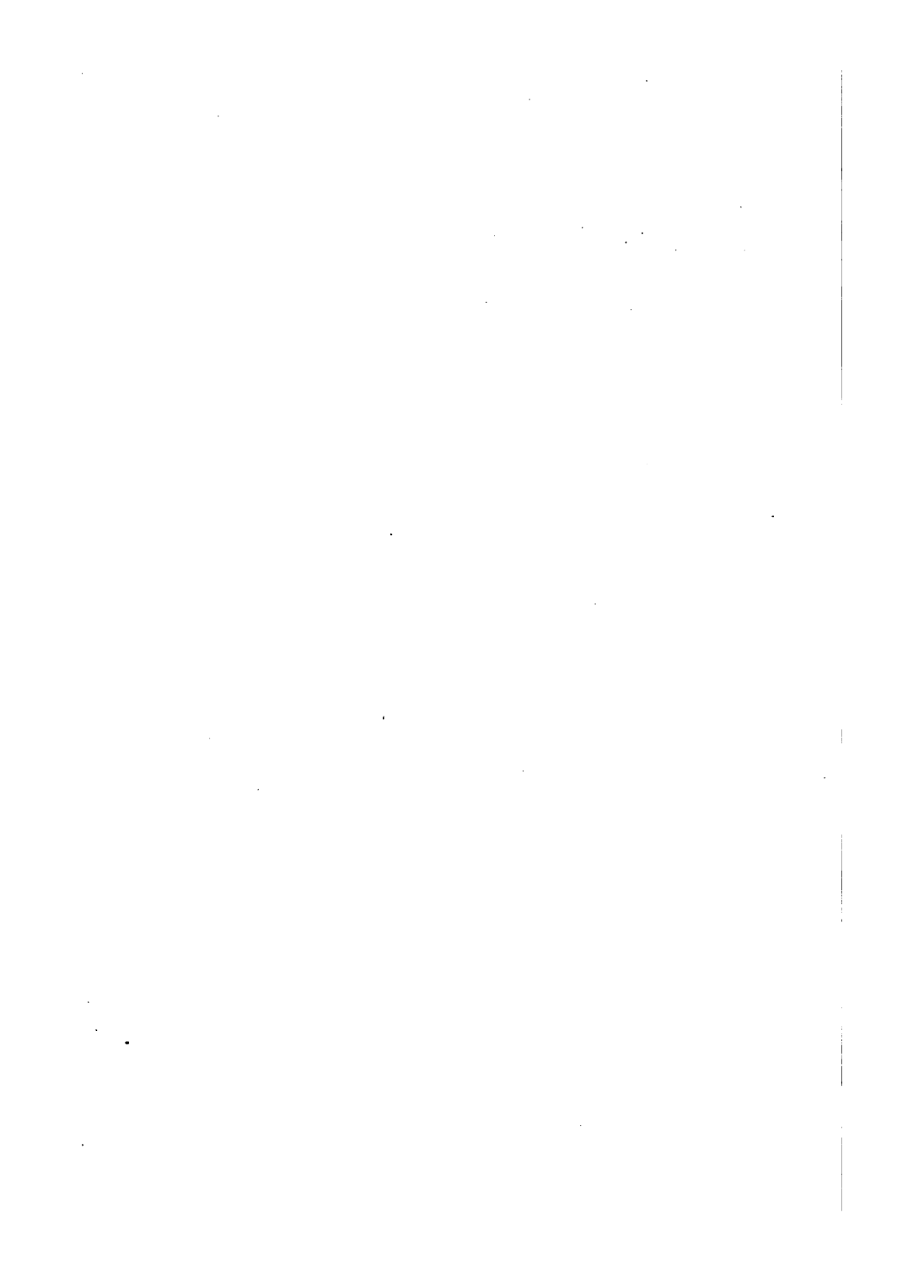
CLAYDON, 11th June.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
I. FOREIGN OPINIONS ON PEASANT PROPERTIES	1
II. A SURVIVAL — SMALL OWNERSHIPS — “LITTLE TAKES”—ALLOTMENTS	30
III. RURAL ITALY AND PEASANT PROPERTIES	72
IV. RURAL LIFE IN RUSSIA	104
V. ARTHUR YOUNG—PEASANT PROPERTIES IN FRANCE, 1787-1887	141
VI. THE SCATTERING AND ENTANGLING OF SMALL PARCELS OF LAND IN FRANCE.	178
VII. A YEOMAN’S HOME IN THE DALES SIXTY YEARS SINCE	204

MAP.

A FRENCH ESTATE	<i>Frontispiece</i>
---------------------------	---------------------



I

FOREIGN OPINIONS ON PEASANT PROPERTIES

2 It is strange that in the numerous discussions concerning Peasant Properties, Germany, where they abound, is comparatively hardly alluded to. Their condition there is, however, considered to be so serious, that three Government Commissions have simultaneously been issued to inquire into the remedies necessary to counteract the evils connected with the present state of their land tenure—one by the Prussian Minister of Agriculture in 1883; another for the Grand Duchy of Baden, which is considered the most searching and complete; the third by the Society of Social Economy, which has been carried out by local inquiries in all parts of Germany, Bavaria, Austria, the Rhine Provinces, Westphalia, Mecklenburg-Schwerin, etc. “The fear that haunts

411

men's minds," says the *Revue des Deux-Mondes* on the German Reports, "is that middle-sized and large properties will altogether disappear, and with them the power of cultivating cereals to advantage." Wheat can be grown advantageously at present only in fields of a certain size, with a large amount of manure, and proper agricultural machinery; how is it possible that the cultivator of scraps of land of an acre or two with the spade or hoe can contend with a scientific system of cultivation, or the enormous supplies of the New World?

Subdivision, according to the Reports, is increasing to an alarming extent; as the population multiplies the size of each portion is diminished. "If at a death the property is not divided equally among the children, and passes to the principal heir, he is obliged to borrow in order to pay the others their shares; he then only vegetates; the next generation at farthest sells—or *vendre c'est morceler*. If the land is divided in kind, the possessor of each small piece is still worse off, and poverty overtakes him then even more quickly; *le système des deux enfants* is coming more and more into practice, to prevent a ruinous partition." "The division is so great that cultivation is

seriously impeded ; the proprietor of, say, twenty-five acres often has it divided into forty or fifty parcels, dispersed over a whole commune." Not only is the time wasted in going from one to another very great, but he cannot cultivate these tiny morsels to advantage, mixed up as they are with those of his neighbours.

In the great plains of Germany we once saw nineteen ploughs with two horses or bullocks each, all at work in the space of a moderate English farm ; a little farther on we counted thirty-six draw-cattle and horses, close together (as these are guided by the voice, only one man is required to each equipage) ; thus eighteen men and a great many women and children were doing work which would have been easily accomplished by half of their number, on the same extent if united—no division of labour is possible.

Professor Voelcker says of the *petite culture* of Germany and Belgium, with both of which he is well acquainted—

"The position of the small peasant proprietors is simply wretched compared to that of a decent English agricultural labourer. Man, wife, sons and daughters, on a small peasant property, have all to work hard from early morn till night, to

gain enough to keep body and soul together. They exist upon the most frugal fare, and live in dirty, crowded hovels; as regards food and housing the English labourer is unquestionably 50 per cent better off than they are. . . . The peasants have no money to cultivate their little fields or to buy stock; the application of artificial manure, of sufficient home-made dung, and the use of labour-saving machinery, are impossible in the *petite culture*. The results are everywhere the same—poor crops, small earnings, an extravagant value put upon the land [which is considered the only mode of getting a living, as in Ireland], and a hard and miserable existence.”

Bismarck, in a speech in the Chamber, remarked that when he went to Varzin, the estate presented to him by Germany, he found about a dozen peasant proprietors. “They are now reduced to half. The others have been obliged to sell to me, to avoid burdens which they cannot bear.” He goes on to say “that protection was the true remedy for this, Let the corn duties be raised.” We shall hardly adopt this method of making peasant properties succeed.

The Secretary of the Agricultural Association at Berlin declares that the whole agricultural pro-

duce in Germany is less than one-half that of England. The number of families in Prussia exempt from direct taxation, because they earn less than £25 a year, about 9s. 7d. a week, was in 1882 upwards of 7,000,000, according to Dr. Geffachen, and the numbers increase every year.

The remedies proposed for the *morcellement* sound strange in our ears; the recent laws in Prussia all tend to create a privileged heir. Amongst them are to be found proposals, 1st, to make a "majorat" (that is, to restore primogeniture!), so that the land can be kept together, and the younger children bought off with a small share in money. 2nd. To register a farm on a list of rural estates (*Hofen-Recht*), after which it shall be indivisible—it must be inhabited and worked by the proprietor, and cannot be either let or mortgaged. 3rd. The mortgages of the peasants are so numerous that an Encumbered Estates Act is demanded for them, also that the debts should be taken over either by the State or by companies such as the popular banks of Schulze-Delitzsch, which would lend money at less usurious interest than the money-lenders receive. "All peasants certainly are not in debt, but in many parts of Germany their mortgages amount to from 54 to

99 per cent on real property," and it is proposed to take from them the power of mortgaging their land, either wholly or in part. 4th. Protection in all its different forms.

The increase of the debts on land (*dette foncière*) and the progressive *morcellement* of property are the chief subjects of anxiety in the inquiries. If the little *parcelles* could be brought together by exchange or sale, the increase in their value would be from 20 to 30 per cent, say the Reports. This union is favoured by legislation in Germany; in France it hardly ever takes place. The jealousy of the *voisin*, and the fear of being outwitted in a bargain, prevent any arrangements from taking place. "*L'échange des parcelles s'accomplit rarement*," says Le Play. "*Je dirais jamais*," was the comment of a French landowner. *Le voisin* is indeed considered as the incarnation of all evil, and not to be dealt with except as such.

The produce on such extremely small areas is only about 15 bushels an acre, as it was in England in the days of Queen Anne. An enlargement of farms took place with us after this period, and in the time of Arthur Young the yield was about 20 bushels. With improved agriculture and larger farms, the average yield, according to the Mark

Lane returns, is now about 32 bushels; in Scotland it has advanced to 40; and this year at C—— a produce of 6 quarters, 45 bushels an acre, has not been uncommon. Mr. Jenkins, Secretary to the Agricultural Society, reports that the average return to the peasant owner in France, Belgium, and Germany is about £30 a year, and that as a rule he works twice as hard as an English labourer, and for half the wages.

An extremely curious experiment, hitherto very little known, has been tried in Mecklenburg-Schwerin. The greatest part of the territory belonged to the Grand Duke; the cultivators were serfs up to 1820, and were considered as yearly tenants, when they became free. In 1867 the land was divided by Government, according to a regular system, into leasehold farms of from 90 to 100 acres, and 7511 peasant-farms of from 10 to 15 acres, held by artisans (Büdner), for whom the land is only an accessory, and 6392 plots for cottagers large enough for a house and garden. Any expenses are charged at 4 per cent besides the rent, with a choice of paying off the principal, which hardly any of the peasants have availed themselves of as yet.

The tenant may not break up his farm or

increase it; if he parts with it he must sell the whole in one piece, as the great object was to protect the country against further subdivision. The small proprietor cannot, therefore, if he wishes it, exchange the spade for the plough, and the interference with the liberty of the subject sounds indeed excessive.

In our northern counties the wages now average £52 a year for a man, £12 for a woman, £6 for a boy, so that from £70 to £80 go into the cottage of the wage-earner; 15s. or 16s. in the midland counties, and even the 12s. a week receiving farther south, in addition to harvest wages, still insure a sum above that realised by the cottier-owner.

“Improved culture on a large scale has more than doubled the general yield of wheat in England, and wages rise with the higher order of agriculture; to a considerable extent (says a great authority), wages keep pace with rents. By the application of machinery, while the cost of production is greatly reduced, wages advance, as machines require more intelligence and trustworthiness in the workman. As a rule, rents are a third lower in Ireland than in England; the wages are there not above a shilling a day, while even in

the poorer districts of England and Scotland they are 2s. and 2s. 6d.

“There is a saying that a poor man makes a poor master; the labourer had better serve a rich one—a wage-finder and work-giver. It may be maintained that a poor man never works for so bad a master as when he works for himself, except as an adjunct to his wage-earning and at his odd moments,” says one authority.

Allotments are admirable for employment at slack times, for supplies of vegetables, etc., and for the moral training in thrift and intelligent industry; but it must be remembered that as the profit, by the showing of their advocates, is from £3 to £4 an acre, and that of the farmer from £7 to £8, the country could hardly afford to have them indefinitely multiplied. There is a tendency also towards their drifting into a few hands. At — twenty-two out of thirty have been united into what is practically a small farm.

Both in France and Germany the cultivation of the small plots is only rendered possible by the slavish toil of the women and children—out in all weathers, ground down with misery and hard work, mowing, ploughing (we have seen three in one field), making hay by taking it up in their arms

and scattering it abroad, spreading dung with wretched little forks, lifting great sacks of potatoes, cutting wood, treading the manure heaps with bare legs every evening, carrying baskets of it on their bare heads.

The number of maimed, halt, and deformed women and children to be seen—guarding a stall-fed cow with a string, three or four sheep or a goat, at their early feed—sitting on the damp grass and the mud, risking the human life which should have been the most valuable of their possessions—is dismal indeed to behold; and we were told repeatedly by doctors that the sickliness and malformation of the children is occasioned by the mothers going out all day, and being unable to attend to them.

The small ownerships now proposed to be encouraged by State action are an attempt to restore the old yeomen and statesmen of the past in England. They have vanished, because the conditions of the world no longer admit of their gaining a living out of the land alone.

This experiment of subdivision has, in fact, been already tried in Ireland. The Registrar-General of Ireland declared that there were at the last census 150,000 holdings so small that it was

impossible for the occupiers to live upon them. The cost of these small farms, and of the *petite culture* in Belgium, worked solely by hand-labour, is found to be more than double that of agriculture on a large scale, with improved implements.

All over England the small ownerships were to be found, and these have been sold everywhere because the mortgaged cottier-owners could not afford to live on them. Land is then a luxury.

As to the moral effects of the excessive subdivision of land, of which we now hear so much, the testimony of a Frenchman is less suspected. Let any one study the dismal story by Balzac of *Les Paysans*. That great master of realistic description, unrivalled in the art with which he works out a picture by touches as minute as those of a Dutch painter, opens with a preface, saying the object of the terrible realism of this study ("d'une vérité effrayante") is to set forth the principal figures of a population forgotten by so many pens, to show—

"Le Paysan, cet infatigable sapeur, ce rongeur qui morcelle et divise le sol, le partage, et coupe un arpent de terre en cent morceaux. . . . S'élevant au-dessus de la loi par sa propre petitesse, ce

Robespierre à une tête et vingt millions de bras, travaille sans jamais s'arrêter, tapi dans toutes les communes, intronisé au Conseil municipal. Cet élément insocial créé par la Révolution absorbera quelque jour la bourgeoisie, comme la bourgeoisie a dévoré la noblesse."

For eight years he says that he "tried to finish this work, the most important of those which he had resolved to write, but recoiled before its difficulty." The book is too monotonously painful to read except as a task—the pictures of the mean, sordid lives of the main part of the peasant population—the dogged way in which they pursue the wretched objects of their existence—*i.e.* the earning and hoarding "*des petits sous dans de vieux bas*;" the lying, cheating, picking, and stealing which are considered lawful as against a "*richard*;" the way in which all means the most vile and repulsive are condoned for the sovereign end—the obtaining of a little bit of land—forms a repulsive picture indeed. "No one," says Balzac, "has had the courage to go into the country and study the permanent conspiracy of those whom we still call the feeble, against those who think themselves the strong—of the peasant against the rich man. The people now has its courtiers as the kings of

old." The details he gives he declares to be minutely true. The scene is laid in Burgundy, and the subject of the conspiracy of a whole district is to force the proprietor of the large estate to sell it. He is an old colonel of the Empire, and by no means a perfect character, but he does his duty both by the land and by the people. He is worsted, however, in the end: his position becomes unendurable; the estate is sold, the woods are cut down, the house is demolished, every trace of garden and pleasure is destroyed, while the ill-cultivated fields are cut up into patches like a chessboard—"avec des misérables maisonnettes comme en bâtissent les paysans."

If it is objected that Balzac is a *romancier*, here is a testimony to the same effect from M. Dussard, a Republican before the time of the Empire, of high political character, and of independent property. He was asked by Mr. Senior how his purchase of an extensive estate near Perpignan had turned out.

"Badly. My neighbours, all peasant proprietors, treat me as a common prey, as a thing to be eaten. They destroy my fences, they turn their cattle into my enclosures, they cut down my young plantations to heat their ovens, they dis-

pute my boundaries, and the tribunals give me no redress when I am plaintiff, and always decide against me when I am defendant. I am a large proprietor, and I am a stranger. In the provinces either of these predicates excludes a man from justice. If the judges, like your judges of assize, were itinerant, or, like your County Court judges, were sent from the capital, or, like your justices of Quarter Sessions, were gentlemen, they would be impartial. But they are the people of the country, ill-born, ill-educated, and ill-paid. I do not know whether they are open to bribery, but they are certainly open to solicitation—in fact, they invite it. My opponent, however, need neither solicit nor bribe. Both the law and the facts are always on the side of the peasant against the great landowner, of the provincial against the Parisian, of the ignorant against the educated man. I must sell my property for half its intrinsic value, and, cheap as it will appear to be, the buyer will find it dear unless he is a native, and unless he breaks it up and sells it in lots.”

It is remarkable that the feature which most perplexes foreign statesmen and economists has till now been almost ignored in the English papers and discussions on the subject, viz. the subdivision

of the subdivisions. The units created by the *partage forcé* are small enough, but even these are not kept together. A man leaves, say, three children and has three little morsels of land; such is the jealous fear of being overreached, that each child insists upon taking his third of each separate piece, while the habit of investing all savings in land makes the peasant buy a bit wherever he can get it, as was often pointed out to us.

With regard to Switzerland, a Report, October 1885, says: "We are in the midst of a long agricultural crisis. Land is going down to half its value, the number of victims is great, and grows greater daily. All our land is cut up into very small slices, 20 or 30 acres and lower. These small properties are overburdened with agricultural buildings and mortgages. At the division of the land on the death of an owner—if one heir keep the property, he is crippled by the sums he has to pay others. If a man is not wealthy enough to own his farm free of mortgage, he is better off as a tenant; in bad years he must pay the interest, or legal proceedings will be taken, whereas a tenant often finds much leniency from his landlord. American, Russian, and Hungarian wheat have checked its cultivation here now for

many years, the farmers have taken to selling milk for concentration or cheese ; the price of both has gone down. Milk is not quite 5s. per cwt., a price which leaves the farmer not much more than his eyes to cry with. Our Swiss agricultural professors preach, 'Your farms are too small, you farm on too small a scale, you have no machinery, etc. Throw your slices of land together and re-create large farms.' But this is almost impossible ; each small piece is crowded with buildings, and even men with money can only buy land, covered with what they neither want nor wish for, but yet for which they would have to pay. . . .

"This poverty-stricken agricultural population is crying out for help from the State." (This, be it remembered, in a Republic, with almost universal suffrage.) "But the State has long since given them all that it can give—cheap schools, roads, railways, inheritance in equal shares, cheap law courts, cheap transfer of land, etc. It cannot, however, prevent the consequences of the imprudence of men in becoming proprietors without the means of paying for what they have bought, or of keeping up what they undertook by their own free will."

The state of the cantons varies exceedingly, and extremes of misery and prosperity are seen side by side. The conditions required for the success of peasant properties may be said to be good soil, a good market, thrift, and intelligence, and the combination must be allowed to be rare. The prosperous parts are within reach of the tourists due to the markets. Indeed, Switzerland has resources of employment in the stream of sight-seers which are not to be found elsewhere.

The latest evidence of the condition of French peasant proprietors is a report by H.M. Consul for the district of Nantes, in a blue-book just published. "Here," it is said, "the vines are dying out; the plants are even being dug up and sold for firewood, no remedies against the phylloxera having succeeded. The protective duties, high as they are, will not allow the farmer to compete with foreign corn, while the price of meat is so low that grass-farming hardly pays. There is an outcry for a large increase of protection, which is almost certain to be conceded. In the subdivision of property, the number of voters interested in land is so great that no Government can resist the pressure brought to bear by the agricultural interest, whose vote can only be purchased by

increasing the price of bread and meat to the rest of the community," a result which every producer desires to obtain at the expense of the rest of the world. It was told how in the early anti-Corn Law days a candidate was preaching on the virtues of Free-trade to a brushmaker : " Free-trade, sir—yes, sir—no doubt, sir ; *but, of course, you'd leave out bristles !*" was the answer.

Norway has long been considered a model country. Mr. Laing, in 1835, described its condition in glowing terms, while its land tenure has been held up as "superior to that of any other part of civilised Europe." Fifty years ago the division of land there had not become excessive, there were few burdens upon it, and the comfort enjoyed by the yeomen or "bonders" was described as great. The account of their condition at the present moment is sadly different. According to a Norwegian paper in 1884, by Dr. Broch, giving the official reports of the prefects of the different provinces, the ruinous subdivision of land, the mortgages, the depressing effect of American competition in corn, the increase in rural taxation, and burdens of all kinds, have produced a very general decline in the position of the yeomen farmers, who have for several years been going downhill.

“Seventy to eighty per cent of the population is settled on the land, and steeped in debt; the burdens on the land are often felt more heavily by the proprietor than by the cottars. The price of corn, etc., is so low and wages are so high that much land cannot be cultivated, and there is a cry for protective duties.” The charge for relief of the poor has increased enormously, and in 1881 8 per cent of the whole population received relief, whereas during the same year the number was 3 per cent in England and Wales.

It is strange that the Cobden Club should have adopted the system of peasant proprietors so cordially, as evidence now collecting from different parts of Europe shows that they must be protectionists. “How otherwise,” writes a French candidate for the Chamber, “can a small proprietor live? His products till now have been protected against foreign competition by the most powerful of protective laws, that of distance. This privilege having been taken away from us by steam, we are obliged to re-establish it artificially.” This cry is repeated in all the reports of each country. After a recital of the evils of the present agricultural crisis among the peasants, the remedy proposed is always the same, *i.e.* “Let the duties on

foreign produce be raised." The great object of peasant life is to buy next to nothing, money is hardly used in peasant economy, and division of labour in production, or in buying and selling, is unknown. The absence of little shops in a French village is very remarkable. "A small proprietor," says M. Lafargue, "insists upon getting everything out of his tiny plot. Wheat or rye for his bread; barley for his chickens; oats for his horse; hemp for his wife and daughters to spin in the long dark winter; and potatoes for his pig, vegetables, etc., whether the ground is fit or unfit." "We makes our own butter, and we lays our own eggs," as was proudly boasted by an English housewife.

That there are many districts where peasant properties succeed is, of course, true, but this will be found to be the case only in conditions which cannot be secured in ordinary agricultural land far from towns. In Westphalia, for instance, the mineral and manufacturing industries have largely increased, and in the neighbourhood of the mines and manufactories, the labourers, miners, and other craftsmen buy a small plot of land on which they build a house and have a garden about it, but not more.

In Belgium the large towns are numerous and

close together, and furnish excellent markets for the produce of the small owners near them who do well. In parts of Normandy, where they have the command of the markets both of London and Paris, and subdivision is not so great, the fruit, poultry, eggs, butter, and milk sent to Paris, fetch high prices, and the peasant owner succeeds. Guernsey and Jersey, where the climate and soil enable the market-gardener to send early vegetables, fruit, and flowers to London ; the Simmenthal, near Thun, where the pastures and soil are remarkably fine and furnish the world with Gruyère cheese, are all examples of the kind of success which it is possible for the peasant proprietor to obtain.

But how rare these advantages are may be seen by the description of different French economists. M. Malo, a civil engineer, many years mayor of his district, says, in a lecture on Socialism, read at a conference on political economy at Lyons, with regard to the peasant proprietors—"There are of course exceptions in everything and everywhere ; but what is their present condition in their *grande généralité*?"—"Fearful labour; an enormous amount of physical force spent, too often wasted, by the fault of hereditary routine ; a diet approaching that

of his own cattle ; the necessity of making his wife and children work as much as, or more than, the beasts of burden ; the incessant fear that one of a thousand mishaps may destroy in a day the harvest and the fruit of the labour of the whole year ; the crushing misery of debt, which so often tortures him, renders him low and servile, and against which he must fight, under pain of being devoured by it. All this labour, all these miseries, all these harrowing anxieties to leave the inheritance of this rock of Sisyphus intact to his posterity ; an inheritance most grievous of all, but accepted without a murmur from father to son, without interruption, and with little hope that the terrible weight will diminish. And on the day when this galley slave is worn out, when at last his muscles refuse service, when he has become an onerous burden for his family, it remains only for him to hope that his uselessness will not be of long duration."

This is a state of things proposed as a panacea for the evils that beset our own social condition, which, though it certainly needs great improvement, is still at a far higher level than that described by French writers.

We are, indeed, invited to go back to a period of the world's history when men, rich and poor,

had few external wants, lived hardly on the produce of the land, bought and sold scarcely anything; when machines for saving labour were unknown, and foreign supplies unheard of, and when the life of man, in the words of Hobbes, was "poor, nasty, brutish, and short." "The population scarcely increased, indeed the death-rate was far beyond the birth-rate in London, where the numbers are kept up by immigration." We cannot reverse the wheels of the world, however anxious we may be to preserve some good features of the past. Would the town advocates of country subdivision, who recommend peasant properties "because more hands are employed in the produce from the land," carry out their ideal in manufactures and commerce? Small forges would certainly employ more hands than great smelting-works: hand-weaving than power-looms and steam-factories. Will they show us an example by attempting to reinstate these equivalents of peasant properties? Canning's "Talk of restoring the Heptarchy" has passed into a truism.

The conditions of agriculture have as entirely changed as all the other material arrangements which rule the world; we cannot go back to processes successful in an earlier stage of civilisation.

The cultivator, peasant, and other, has to contend with the enormous supplies of the New World, brought to his door by new appliances on land and sea. With fields of wheat 3000 acres in extent in California, and farms of 25,000 acres, where the latest Americanism is that a furrow takes a whole day in the ploughing; with herds of cattle in the ranches of North and the plains of South America; with wool and frozen meat from flocks of 30,000 sheep in Australia; how can the spade and the tiny plough fight such a battle, as the world goes on?

New modes of working the land to advantage may arise; perhaps co-operation may be called in (although hitherto it appears to succeed better in the business of distribution than in that of production). There remains, however, a large field for the saving labourer even at the present time. Whatever processes require minute care and attention on a small scale, the raising of vegetables, fruit, corn grown not to sell but to eat, pigs, poultry, dairy produce—all these may be made to pay by the small owner where there is a market at hand, and should be encouraged to the utmost.

If the man prefers to buy land, every facility should be afforded for its cheap transfer—free trade indeed in land; but the evidence given by Sir

James Caird shows that the small man does best for himself by using the capital of his landlord, which he has at a very low interest when he hires land, instead of sinking his own money in its purchase—"that turning aside of capital from the cultivation of the land to its purchase, which is one of the chief vices of our French rural economy," says De Lavergne. Nothing can be more severe than the account of the evils of peasant properties given by the best of the French economists. Leconteux, Professor of Rural Economy at the Institute, says: "Of the 8,000,000 of proprietors in France, 3,000,000 are on the pauper roll, exempt, that is, from personal taxation. Getting rid of one order of landlords and their rents, they have subjected themselves to another though invisible order, the mortgagees, and to their heavier and more rigid rents." An examination made as to the agricultural population by the Institut Naturel of Paris reports that "Peasant proprietors have been found in Brittany and elsewhere in conditions wherein intelligent agriculturists would not allow their beasts to live, if they knew how to manage them."

A remarkable account has been given lately in the *Edinburgh Review* of the amount of State agri-

culture education in France. Three classes of schools are provided, and since 1848 all have been recognised as part of the system of the State. Lectures, conferences with the proprietors in each canton, who visit the villages and try to spread the knowledge of improvements, while in 1879 each department was to be provided with a professor. The cost to the State of each pupil who has passed certain examinations is about £10 a year. Questions of drainage, irrigation, the restoration of the forests, so as to check the ruinous floods, caused by the way in which the peasant proprietors have cut down the trees, are all helped by the State. This assistance is of old date.

In France, the State indeed, whether under a monarchy or a republic, has always tried to promote the progress of good farming. After all these efforts it is extraordinary to hear the complaints of all the best French political economists of the ignorance of the peasants concerning agriculture, and their obstinate opposition to all change as to crops and culture to be found among them.

Skill in husbandry has hardly improved since the days of Arthur Young, and the failure of State education is another proof of the impossibility of imparting information, however good, from above,

unless the ground has been properly prepared to receive it. What is the condition in France? The average of persons in country districts above six, who can neither read nor write, is 30 per cent. If we in England are to profit by the schools of agriculture which it is now proposed to establish here, we must begin with some preliminary knowledge taught in our elementary schools, or the scheme will certainly fail as in France.

Peasant properties, whatever their advantage, do not appear to sharpen the wits of their owners, except in the matter of bargaining, "when they will cavil to the tenth part of a hair" over a penny. There are a number of ill-sounding proverbs about them, such as "Ninety-nine sheep and one man of Champagne make a hundred beasts," "A fool of Sologne," etc., where the small ownerships abound.

An English gentleman was staying with a French proprietor, and found him using a wooden plough. "Why do not you have an iron one from England?" (where he had often been). "I should have my house burnt over my head by the peasants if I did, or if I sent my produce to any other than the home one," replied he.

In a work published at Paris this year—*Relèvement de l'Agriculture*, by Lafargue, on the difficul-

ties which beset the land question—"the alarming situation of France, which is passing at this moment through a terrible agricultural crisis," is spoken of. The author goes on to describe the "increasing depopulation of the country and the want of hands, while the increase in wages makes the difficulty of fighting against foreign competition greater and greater."

"The excessive subdivision of property, which prevents the use of agricultural machines; the scattering of the patches entangled to a hopeless degree one with another, which gives rise to interminable and ruinous lawsuits, and to inextinguishable hatreds, offering insurmountable obstacles to regular and economical cultivation; the scarcity and bad condition of the country roads; the complete isolation in which the peasants live; an ignorance which often makes them attempt to grow what their soil is least fitted to produce, and to employ insufficient and vicious modes of culture, condemned alike by science and experience"—these are among the causes to which M. Lafargue attributes "the depression which is so serious at the present moment in France," and it can hardly be hoped that the best mode of combating the difficulties of our present

situation will be to introduce such a system at home.

Agriculture is becoming more and more a manufacture, requiring scientific appliances and machinery to be successful. There are many inventions, as valuable as those hitherto adopted, still to be utilised—like ensilage, perhaps the cutting of drains by steam machinery, etc.

With regard to the labourer : of the three orders connected with the land—the landlord, the farmer, and the working-man—the last is the only one who has prospered in the present agricultural crisis, and he is now proportionally the best-doing of the three. His wages have risen and are rising, and it would surely be dangerous to risk reducing him to the miserable pittance earned by so large a proportion of the peasant proprietors, as is shown to be the case in all those countries by so many competent witnesses and Reports in Germany, France, Switzerland, Belgium, and Norway.

II

A SURVIVAL—SMALL OWNERSHIPS— “LITTLE TAKES”—ALLOTMENTS

AN exceedingly curious “survival” of the old condition of land tenure in England was still to be found up to 1845, in a Buckinghamshire village. The manor belongs to the charity of Ewelme for poor brethren, and had continued in the same condition as when given to the charity in 1441.

The account, in Domesday Book, of the parish shows an earlier phase of ownership. Edward the Confessor had bestowed one hide (120 acres) of very good land “to Christ and St. Peter at Westminster,” by which the Dean, their successor, still profits. A man called “Bondus the Standard-bearer,” his name showing that he or his father had been a bond-slave, held a large portion under the Earl of Morton : “Alric held under him, and had four hides for his manor.” *Graviter miserabiliter*

is added—not an engaging description. The manor of Marsh Gibbon was taken possession of by the Conqueror, and bestowed on his son, the Earl of Cornwall. After passing through two or three other hands, it was given by the Earl of Suffolk to Ewelme; but under all the changes above, the subordinate manner of culture and of holding continued apparently the same. The property consisted of 2752 acres, which were divided into 3509 strips of land set at every possible angle, from nine to thirty feet wide and about nine or ten chains long, with a grass path called a balk between each. As a number of lots belonged often to the same holder, each ownership was marked by some sign, such as a pitchfork, a pair of pincers, a hook, or a letter. Each allotment was an acre or half an acre in size, the clerk by right of his office holding about six acres in seven or eight strips at the time of the last change.

The number of farmers had much diminished, and some had as much as three “yard lands” (a yard land is 30 acres). The whole parish was entirely unenclosed, and the agriculture most primitive. A threefold course was enforced on the arable land, which was divided into three portions, on each of which a sequence of corn,

beans (or potatoes), and then a fallow, was rigorously carried out. No man was allowed to cultivate his pieces as he pleased; the succession of crop, or no crop, on each parcel must be complied with by all alike. The village chronology was calculated by the rotation, *e.g.* "The child as were born two year sin the lower field was in beans," etc. Another portion was in pasture, half of which was alternately mown and fed, "the lands" being apportioned by lot, and an old man who gave the account said that "a land was one swathe of the scythe and a bit wide, and may be nine or ten chains long." When the grass was cut for hay, the boundaries were marked out by stones, at the head and tail of the strips. Outside the apportioned land lay common, where the cattle and sheep were tethered to prevent their wandering over and destroying the crops, as there were no fences, ditches, or walls in any direction, and no roads, only muddy ways across the strong clay soil, and a right of turning the ploughs on a cross strip at the end called the "headland." "Many who had no claim to the arable had rights of pasture for so many sheep and cattle on the common." In order to secure a fair distribution of the "ploughing" "you had the shady side of

the balk one year, and the sunny side the next," so that there was little temptation to improve land which would not be in your possession for more than a year.

No tradition or memory remained in the village as to the reasons or the history of the numerous, perplexing, and most inconvenient customs, restrictions, and laws of the manor. But when we turn to the accounts of Village Communities all over Europe the "survival" becomes clear.

"The oldest discoverable forms of property in land were collective. A number of families inhabited a village, held the land of the village in common, and cultivated the arable lands in lots. The cattle grazed on the common pasture, the householder felled wood in the common forest, the cultivated land of the community was divided into three great fields, with a rude rotation of crops, corns, beans, and a fallow once in three years. Each householder had a lot in each of the three fields, which he tilled for himself with his sons and his slaves, but he could not cultivate as he pleased: he must sow the same crop as the rest, and let his lot lie fallow with the rest, he must not interfere with the rights of other householders to pasture their sheep and oxen

on his fallow and on his stubble," says Sir Henry Maine.

The number of minute and intricate rules, of what they might and might not do, constituted a pure despotism. To insure equality the lots were shifted from year to year. These common fields were divided into long strips, separated by green balks of turf, the pasturage on these, which were not more than three yards wide, amounted in one manor to eighty acres. "The waste and inconvenience of such an arrangement may be still seen in parts of Germany." "There is but one voice as to the barbarousness of the agriculture in the common arable field, and as to the quarrels and heart-burnings of which the 'shifting severalties' in the meadow land have been the source."

At length, in 1845, the much-abused Inclosure Commissioners—who did good service in the case of Marsh Gibbon at least—consolidated the whole of the strips, giving to each holder a piece of ground equal to that of their several parcels, minus a fixed portion which had to be sold to pay for the expenses of the redistribution, fencing, etc.

Mr. Seebohm describes how evidence for twelve hundred years from the seventh century, in the laws of King Ine quoted by King Alfred,

shows a similar state of things. The yard land was the unit — the normal holding, consisting of a bundle generally of thirty scattered acres, ten in each of the three divisions, in strips of acres and half acres, tilled by work rendered to the manorial lord of the ham or tun. The acre was a furlong—furrow-long, *i.e.* the length of the drive of the plough before it is turned, which by long custom was fixed at forty rods—two or four rods or roods in width, lying side by side. Access was given to these by the headland, at right angles to the strips, on which there was a right to turn the ploughs; the owner of the headland must, therefore, wait to till his land till all the strips are ploughed. Each yard land was bound by lot to provide two oxen for the co-operative village plough-team of eight, yoked four in a line, the ploughman in front going backwards to keep the team straight. The lots seem to have been shifted perpetually, till at length the pieces were scattered all over the fields. The yard land of thirty acres in one case contained eight half-acre strips of arable land, three rood-strips of arable land, two doles, one acre of pasture, three half-acres of pasture, and one half-acre of meadow. "If the holding continued of the same size from one generation to another, it was a sign

that it was servile and did not belong to a free village." As time went on "there was a gradual tendency," says Seebohm, "to greater freedom."

"The slaves, the Theows, bought and sold in the market and exported across the sea were far below the villeins, predial serfs, bound to the soil. Lastly, tenants at will, becoming by custom *adscripti glebæ*, and therefore tenants for life, gradually gaining the right of undivided succession. The freedom of individual enterprise and property, which marked the new order, shows a rebellion against the communism and forced equality of serfdom and tribal communities. Such systems are not likely to be the economic goal of the future."

The course which the tenure of land has passed through seems to be as follows:—In the earliest times property did not apply to land which was common to all, but only to the possession of slaves, sheep, and cattle, "the proof of which is," says Mommsen, "that, amongst the Romans, fortune was called *pecunia*, from *pecus*, a flock." The earliest metallic money bore the stamp of an ox. Each family had a right of common pasturage, so that cattle could be received as payment, which would have been useless to a landless man.

When society became more settled, and the land belonged to a village or a community, it was cultivated jointly; but "the exceeding quarrelsomeness of these little societies, and the frequency of war between the tribes," soon brought about a change, as the conquerors after a fight either took the land or forced the conquered to hold it as serfs under them. A large share was often given to the chief of the clan or to a successful leader in war.

Some form of collective property seems to have been common to all countries, and it is still to be found among wild tribes such as the Afghans, where Colonel Stewart, when on the Frontier Commission, found it in full force. The system produces, he says, frightful blood-feuds, the man whose lot had fallen to him in pleasant places, such as rich land near a stream, often refusing to give it up at the end of his rightful term (which in Afghanistan lasts from ten to fifteen years) for the stony mountain bit, which may be his next share, and he often fights rather than yield. Inter-marriages are almost obligatory from the necessity of keeping the family together, and losing none of the rights belonging to the sept.

The inconveniences and disputes entailed by the minute rules and interferences with free

action, which were necessary to carry out the intricate system of collective culture, at last produced everywhere, at least in Europe, a division of the soil among the different families. In the middle ages, however, says Laveleye, "These communities for the cultivation of the soil seem to have been universal, the association of a great number of the same family under the same roof on the same property, having their work and their profits in common, was the characteristic feature of France at that period. Agriculture was then carried out all over the country by co-operative associations of peasants—work, indeed, of all kinds was performed in common—by the religious communities, peasant communities, trade corporations. The benefits especially which were conferred by the monks in cultivating waste places, and farming parts of the country desolated by war, have been immense. Probably in the middle ages less was talked of the spirit of association, but that spirit was far stronger than now."

A great number of instances of these family ownerships are given by Laveleye, some of which still exist in such isolated provinces as Auvergne and Brittany.

"Family communities were also very general in

Italy, and there still exist traces of them in the different provinces. A landowner prefers dealing with them to small isolated holdings, as an association has more resources for the payment of rent and the execution of contracts, is more capable of undertaking cultivation on a wider scale, of resisting loss in bad years, and other inseparable accidents of farming. The communities consist generally of four or five households living in common, under a chief who regulates the work, buys and sells, etc., and of a female head called *massara*, who looks after the domestic economy. But they are dying out. The taste for independence, the desire to grow rich, the modern spirit in one word, have undermined these ancient institutions, as on the borders of the Danube, and as of old in France. "Count Jacini (says M. Laveleye) has well analysed the feeling which will bring about their entire disappearance. Men begin to say, Why should we remain with our families under the authority of a chief? It would be much better that each one should work and think for himself. If each individual works for his own profits, the common revenue suffers, and dissensions and quarrels about money destroy the unity. The women especially cannot stand the authority of the *massara*.

They all want to have an household to themselves."

A socialist farm in Hampshire—Queenwood—came to an untimely end, greatly because the women would not endure the co-operative teapot. "We like to make our own tea in our own pot," they said. "Many of the associates see the advantages of the scheme, but the desire of living independently carries the day and the community is broken up."

The last stage of the tenure of land was when separate ownership became general, the result of the modern spirit of individualism, shown as much in the large properties of England as in the particularism-run-mad of the tiny peasant properties abroad. And a new set of evils pertaining to the excess of subdivision in many parts of Europe is causing the greatest anxiety to the different Governments, while the French and German political economists are trying to persuade the peasants once more to combine.

"The almost intolerable obstacles to all improvement, to the use of machines, of proper drainage, etc., in the smallness and excessive entangling of the morsels, often situated at every point of the horizon in a commune, render good cultivation

impossible. How could a hay-cutting machine, even if there were one, harvest the thirty or forty parcels, or a steam plough turn around in a piece of an acre or less in size? The expense, when land is used by the peasant owners to grow crops the most unsuitable to the soil, of change to a better system, can only be carried out by large landholders."

Nothing can be worse for the trade of a country than a population of peasant proprietors who buy nothing; the absence of shops which in a French village is most remarkable. In the *Commune Agricole*, by M. Bonnemère, he says:

"The peasant insists on obtaining everything from his land in this extreme subdivision, and to have nothing to buy. Whether the nature of the soil allows it or not, he must have corn for himself, barley for his chickens, oats for his horse, potatoes for his pigs. Every one must have a morsel for his vineyard and for vegetables, and a corner for hemp, to occupy his wife and daughters during the long leisure of the melancholy winter. All these on soil the most unfit for their culture, and even though he may be obliged to sink a well close to that of his neighbour, which he must not use. Indeed, it seems as if they had solved the problem

of obtaining the worst possible produce by the most expensive, laborious, and repugnant of processes."

In the beautiful fertile regions near Aix, in Savoy, and in the Auvergne country, when we asked what was cultivated on such of the tiny plots as were not vineyards, the answer was always the same: "*Un peu de tout.*"

Protection, of course, is their universal creed. The candidate for a rural district in the last French election writes: "All our social organisation rests on the little owner, and he cannot exist unless his home-grown produce is protected against the cheaper products from abroad." The peasant, therefore, eats his expensive corn, spade-tilled, his high-priced beetroot sugar, etc., and comforts himself by believing that it is economical, whereas in England "wages," says Mr. Bright, "have nearly doubled since Free Trade," while the consumption of bread, sugar, tea, etc., has enormously increased among our working classes.

The consequence of this style of farming is, says Lafargue,¹ that "there are 10,000,000 of small proprietors in France who, with the help of their families, consume as much as they produce; they

¹ *Relèvement de l'Agriculture.*

eke out a scanty subsistence and vegetate miserably, condemned by their voluntary isolation to a labour as severe as it is unproductive. . . . The condition of agriculture brought about by our subdivision of the land, and the distance from each other of the morsels belonging to one owner, condemns a man to work such as animals and machines ought to execute, and not only reduces him to the level of a beast, but curses the soil with sterility; the consequence is that 3,000,000 of the small proprietors are on the pauper list of France."

The peasants cannot be sold up by the State, as they are only life owners, for it is always forgotten that the entail on their children is far more strict than any in England. Nearly one-half of France, excluding the mountain pastures, is under corn and potatoes, two white crops in succession, followed by a bare fallow, which means no less than 16,000,000 of acres yearly growing nothing, and Mr. Jenkins declares that, notwithstanding its sparse population, and its variety of climate and culture, France cannot be regarded as much more than self-supporting.

The chief remedy proposed is the return to the system of co-operation. It is suggested that the "methods of cultivating large farms should be

applied to small properties, fusing together a number of little domains which might be farmed by one man, the small owners carrying their work elsewhere; both the expenses and the gains to be in common, so as to enable them to buy machines, to drain, etc. Instead of a system of each man for himself, the advantage of an association, each for all and all for each," are set forth. If, however, the two or three acres belonging to a small owner are melted down into fields of a proper size in a large farm, his interest cannot be much more absorbing than that of £10 in a bank. "Property," says Mr. Druce, "has an excellent effect upon a man,¹ but not more in land than in any other form," unless immediately under his own eye and cultivated by his own hands.

"The spirit of fraternity which rendered possible the co-operative associations of old has, however, died away," says Laveleye. "The spirit of individuality which characterises modern times brings

¹ Lord Houghton used to tell a story of A. de Vigny's excellent cook, who in 1848 was furiously *rouge*, indeed *écarlate*. The following year, when he returned to Paris, he inquired after her. "Oh, elle a fait une petite succession, et elle est devenue *réac!*" (the then slang for *réactionnaire*). The mollifying effect of property had had its result, but it was money, not land, that had changed the views of the scarlet cook.

about their ruin. Moreover, the abolition of serfage and of mortmain has taken away one of the most powerful incentives to village communities. Serfs could only inherit under a *régime* of collective property, but when the rights of the lord of the manor took the form of rent, the peasants, no longer serfs, yielded to the new desire to become independent owners, and divided the common property. The new aspirations were fatal to institutions which rested only on invariable rules of ancient custom, not on written law, and the quarrels and difficulties thus entailed brought them to an end."

There is a curious report in 1783 concerning one of these family communities, addressed to the provincial assembly at Berri. It says:

"The associates only tried to cheat each other for their individual benefit. Every one wished to profit by the advantages of the association without taking his part of the charges. With many hands but little work is done. The chief of the association, it is complained, administered, but would not work. No one would tell of his individual profits, they hide their beehives and sheep, and will do nothing for the community. The real co-operative spirit is dead."

It is almost pathetic to see, in the whirligig of time, how common property and co-operative associations have been tried in every possible form in past times, and thrown aside as unsuccessful, how the new golden age was supposed to be coming with the introduction of individual ownerships, and how now the hopes of the future are centred in a return to some form of co-operation, better and bigger than before.

That the method should be tried in farming, as in other trades, is no doubt well, but the prospect of success in a general application of the principle does not seem to be great. Good results have been hitherto obtained from distributive rather than from productive co-operation. The head of such a farm must be of exceptional intelligence, probity, and knowledge of business in order to succeed, and the supply of such men, as may be seen in the small co-operative shops, is very much less than the demand. Collective action, however, in the form of a dairy, where the milk of small owners could be made into butter and cheese, or in fruit to be supplied to large towns, eggs, poultry, etc., in quantities too small to be worth sending alone, might be of great use.

Much has been said of the admirable effects of

common land. As to the "waste," the disposal of which has of late created so many heart-burnings, the Buckinghamshire march has here useful experience to give. Roadside waste is merely a part of the adjoining fields, which before the days of hard roads was necessarily left vacant to enable vehicles of any kind to choose fresh ground, and avoid "the slough of Despond," into which the direct way always sank during the winter and in wet weather, and which Bunyan must have known to his cost in the neighbouring country.

Among the old Claydon Papers, Sir Ralph Verney, driving down from London with his own horses, describes, as a quite ordinary occurrence, how his "coch" was "dug out of the mud near Aylesbury by a neighbouring farmer." In a clay soil this "waste" often extended over two or three hundred yards in width, still belonging to the owner of the field. Hedges enclosing the road space are a very modern invention. Under the old lax management of estates, when land was of little value, these pieces, when near villages, were taken possession of and built upon, of course without payment and without permission. About fifty such squatters were to be found on the Charity lands at Marsh. Sometimes the piece on which their huts were put up

(it could not be called built) measured only about twelve feet square. The walls were of mud, boards, hurdles, withy, and a little brick and stone, with a pigsty alongside. They consisted often of only one room, sometimes with a loft above reached by a ladder, the slope of the roof, through which the sky could be seen, beginning at the floor. "One of these," said our informant, "held two beds, and the children had to climb across their parents for to get to theirn inside, and when they got big, and the mother's father came to live wi' 'em, he had to do the like." An eye-witness described

"The squalid misery of the poor wretched woe-begone men and women, above all of children, from whom happiness of any wholesome kind seemed hopelessly gone. Hungry, half-starved families crowding round a miserable bowl of potatoes, often without a bit of bacon, eked out with bread and weak tea. Miserable girls of fifteen and sixteen, with still more miserable puny babies in their arms, clothed in rags (illegitimate children, as a matter of course, with such houses), and the reckless sullen fathers ready to hate and curse, and, with very little encouragement, to do worse,"—these were the owners.

Pig-stealing, thefts of all kinds, hardly any honest labour, lawlessness and misery within, filth, undrained and unclean surroundings without, gave little encouragement to the idea of the advantages to the labourer of settling on the waste.

There is another kind of waste—the heathery commons and rough corners of land. The quantity of these has been enormously exaggerated. The returns in 1875 showed the amount of common land to be 1,524,647 acres, the greater part mountain-sides and rocky slopes, etc., fit only for sheep. “The waste consists everywhere of the worst land of a country,” said Lord Salisbury to a deputation of the unemployed who proposed to cultivate it, as a panacea for the improvement of the agricultural working class. “The waste lands are the bad lands of a country. If at present it does not pay to cultivate good land, how can we hope much from the results out of bad?” Those acquainted with districts like the No Man’s Land in the New Forest know the sort of poaching, thieving, wretched life that is led by the people, the hovels in which they dwell, their neglect of cultivation and sanitary requirements, etc. In a journal by John Smith of Nibley, born in the “sweet and salutary aire of Cotswold,”

and priding himself on being a "hundreder of Berkeley," he mentions, writing about 1610—

"The observation of many wise men, 'that the more large the waste of grounds of a manor are, the poorer are the inhabitants.' Such commons or waste grounds, used as they commonly are, yield not the fifth part of their true value, draw many poor people from other places, burden the township with beggarly cottages, inmates, alehouses, and idle people, where the greater part spend most of their days in a lazy idleness and petite thieveries, and few or none in profitable labour."

Most of the Scotch boroughs have found out these evils and sold their "commonities."

Economy in the use of man's labour, of all the most valuable and expensive, is the object sought after by the best economists. Mr. Jenkins, secretary to the Royal Agricultural Society, says that 'in England seven and a half persons are engaged in cultivation of one hundred acres of land, 9 per cent, that is, of the whole population, which may be said to amount to eighty-five for each hundred acres, leaving seventy-seven and a half who can be otherwise occupied.' In Belgium, which is held up for our imitation, the proportion of the population is eighty-eight to every hundred acres of cul-

tivated land. Thirty-one per cent are engaged in agriculture, *i.e.* twenty-seven and a quarter of the eighty-eight are engaged in tilling the soil, leaving only sixty and three-quarters who can work elsewhere. As to the comparative food of the two nations, the average consumption of meat per head in Belgium is forty-three pounds per annum, as against ninety-five pounds consumed in England. France is one of the countries most extravagant in labour. M. Bonnemère declares that five to six millions in England perform the agricultural work which it takes more than double the number in France to accomplish, while they obtain less than half as much produce.¹

To diminish the cost of production is the great object of all economic calculation, while the new doctrine is, that the largest number of hands should be employed in performing agricultural work—"to restore the labourer to the land," as it is called. In this case Russia has achieved the highest result of all. She employs more men to produce less corn than any other country, *i.e.* 85 per cent of population to produce sixteen hectos. Italy comes next in the scale, while

¹ "Agriculture is the art of making the earth produce the largest crop of useful vegetables at the smallest expense."

Great Britain employs only twelve men to produce forty hectos of grain.

The experiment of cutting up large estates into small properties all over the country, which is the panacea of the new land reformers, has been already tried in Russia. In a report (1885) to Parliament by the British Consul at Taganrog, we are told that "the rich and influential class of landed proprietors is fast disappearing, the majority are ruined. When the serfs were emancipated in 1861, a portion of land from eight to nine acres per head was allotted throughout Russia to the peasants, who occupy themselves with cultivating their own ground. The landowners had great difficulty in obtaining labour ; they attempted an improved system, with machines, on their properties, with money borrowed from the Land Banks. They knew little of farming, however, and did not generally reside on their estates, while their stewards only looked after their own interests. Taxes increased, bad years followed, the interest was not paid, thousands of mortgages were foreclosed by the banks. One-half at least of these estates cannot be sold, though the village communes, where there had not been land available to give the legal proportion, have bought many of them.

“It has taken only thirteen years to ruin the landed aristocracy of Russia, who are being everywhere replaced by peasant proprietors ; and the same fate seems to be in store for a large number of the little owners who work out the soil and are utterly improvident. As almost the whole country will be in the possession of bankrupts, the system is fraught with serious consequences for the country. The greatest poverty prevails, and capital cannot be employed under such conditions. The amount of land which was considered enough twenty-five years ago to enable the peasants to live on is now quite insufficient, when communal and government taxes have all increased, the price of corn has gone down, and the seasons have been bad. Agriculture is wretched, scarcely any manure is used, the produce is from two and a half to four and a half of the quantity sown, whereas in England it varies from fifteen to twenty. Although rents are only about 2s. an acre for large holdings, and for garden ground from 11s. to 15s., the peasants cannot at the present time live and pay their taxes. Their cattle are often seized, but more often the taxes have to be remitted. The peasants constantly renounce their allotments, varying from eight and three-

quarters up to forty-seven acres, and pay an annual tax (obrok) to the commune to be allowed to go and work elsewhere." The freedom of the English labourer to carry his labour where he pleases, unclogged by the tie of land which binds the peasant proprietor in France and elsewhere, is said by Mr. Chadwick to be one of his greatest advantages.

Land in England is now held by the labourers of the three different tenures, "little takes" allotments, and small ownerships. These last, the old "States men" of the North, as they were called, and the yeomen owning their own farms in the Midland counties, of whom much has been made in the history of the Civil Wars, are practically extinct as a class. They still linger in Lincolnshire, but the bad times, which they have stood worse than larger owners, have nearly ruined them, the mortgages with which they are saddled having been so heavy that the land has been often parted with to pay them off.

Of the smaller properties of two or three acres Mr. Chadwick says that, while in the Poor Law administration, he passed sales amounting to three-quarters of a million sterling in value, chiefly of plots which the cottier-owner had given up to the

parish to entitle them to Poor Law relief. M. de Lavergne says "they have vanished because the conditions of the world no longer admit of the owners gaining a living out of the land alone. It must not be supposed that any revolution destroyed them in England; they have sold their property and become tenant farmers because they have discovered that they could turn their capital to more profit by doing so, but a time will come when a good many small French proprietors will make the same discovery, as capital invested in land returns at most 2 or 3 per cent, and when invested in farming, if judiciously employed, should bring in from 8 to 10."

Peasant ownerships appear only to answer in the neighbourhood of great towns where they can sell their butter, milk, and poultry, and eke out a livelihood with their little carts, or with market gardens where the fruit and vegetables can be disposed of at a profit. An excellent judge observes that to succeed "the wife must be a 'striving' woman, the man must work hard and not drink, the land must not be bought with borrowed money, and there must be some occupation to support the family besides the ownership;" with such conditions the labourer will succeed everywhere on any undertaking.

In Hampshire, where 200 acres were cut up into small lots, the agriculture was miserable, the houses and buildings extremely bad, and, which is a clear proof of want of success, they were perpetually changing hands. A tailor and a policeman, each of whom had saved a little money and bought lots, were obliged after a season to give them up. Of late, however, a layer of better soil has been found, under the poor sand, which grows strawberries. These are carried into Southampton, where they sell well.

The most successful instance we hear of these small ownerships is sent from what is called an "orcharding neighbourhood," where the manufacture of jam can be carried out, Mr. Gladstone's grand panacea for agricultural distress.

Little fruit orchards in Worcestershire, with black currants as undergrowth (these not being eaten by birds), let for £7 an acre.

About eighty years ago a large common here was sold in small lots. It was a favourable soil for cherries, damsons, etc., which have a good sale at Birmingham, but the excessive uncertainty of the English climate prevents all calculation of profit.

The houses are inhabited by the descendants of the original purchasers. One of two acres and a

cottage is let by one brother to another at £15 a year—a high rent, depending upon the sale of the cherries, damsons, and a large “Bergamy” pear, none of which have borne anything to speak of for the last four years. They were selling their cow, as it did not pay to buy fodder for her.

There had been constant work in the neighbourhood till of late, when in consequence of the fall in the price of coppice wood, which would have given employment to the heads of a dozen families, it is allowed to stand uncut till better times. It sold formerly for £12 an acre, and now only brings £3, which barely pays the charges upon it for fourteen years. A small instance of the way in which the slackness of trade injures all classes alike. The cottage here was but poor, the rooms very low and not in good repair, and the two others built on to it were still worse. They let at eighteenpence a week, “when I can get the rent, but that is not often. One of them pays regular now, however, because her husband is in prison and she goes out to work herself and brings her money in. I should be better off as a tenant,” he says, “for I pays a big rent like on the mortgage.” There are eight children, the two eldest have enlisted, and the mother told us with tears in her

eyes, "that her third would go too, because work was so scarce this winter." They had a cow, a pig, and a good stock of chickens. A third holding was inhabited by the son of the original purchaser, who paid £20 for his acre. He had two tidy cottages, no cow, for the land was not enough to feed one, but he kept a horse, and did work for market and coals. He complained of the failure of the damsons for the last four years. "I have trees enough for twenty pots, worth from £12 to £15, but they had not a pot upon them this year."

The tenant of the next cottage pays £9 for his house and three acres of poor grass. He has had regular work hitherto, but the farmer no longer requires his services. He picks up a living where he can. Three young children and a few chickens. "Would you like to buy your land?"—"No, I am better off as I am; it don't pay to borrow."

The next ownership was larger, and the house of a better description. Six acres, chiefly planted with cherries, pears, apples, and plums; there was no cow, as the herbage is poor, but a couple of ponies, and the man fetches and carries fruit for his neighbours. He is son of the original purchaser. "But I have a big mortgage sitting upon me, and I have got a bad landlord, meaning myself,

for when any repairs were to be done, or improvement made, I have nobody to go to." There were eight children ; six still at home.

Another was an old orchard notable in the district. The trees looked more vigorous, and some of the newer sorts had been planted. There were a few very large cherry trees, which in a good year produced as much as ten pots, at an average of 10s. each. Chickens and pigs ran in and out, but no cow. It was more profitable to mow the grass and sell the hay. They did not keep bees, because the ground was high, and "bees carries a sight of stuff inside their hind legs, they should have down hill to go home with, and we lies too high."

Another cottage with only two acres, was a picture of neatness and comfort, the land was well done by, and there were some large cherry and pear trees upon it, under which fed sheep, pigs, chickens, and a tame fox, chained to a cherry tree, in a kennel made of stones. The old lady was very proud of him ; her husband had dug him up when he was a cub. Their well-doing was all a question of thrift ; the next, with twelve acres, a good deal of it in fruit, but with a wife who was not such a notable one, the house was dirty and untidy, the children

badly clothed, though as the man buys wood by the acre, keeps two horses, takes a great deal of fruit to market and does a good deal of hauling, they ought to be well off. Like all the freeholds, his property is what they called "sat upon," that is, laden with mortgage.

Secondly, with regard to small holdings, or tenancies on hire, "Little Takes," as they are called, these may be made to answer in favourable circumstances in all parts of England. Their number is very great, "nearly three-fourths are," says Mr. Druce, the agricultural commissioner, "under 50 acres of all the farms in England."

The limit of size would appear to be what a man and his family can manage for themselves. As soon as it comes to hiring labour it is nearly impossible to get any profit out of them. The chief part, if not all, should be pasture, not arable. In Cheshire, on Lord Tollemache's estate, which has been so often quoted, are forty farms, between fifteen and forty acres, and 270 cottages with three acres each of pasture land. The cottages are generally near the farms, which saves much additional walking for the labourer (but has the disadvantage of entailing the journeys to school for the children and to the shop and church for

the wife). They all have cows, and sell butter, which is collected by the small dealers. To provide against the loss of a milker, a cow club has been established. The rents are from £10 to £11.

Not only, however, here, but in Cheshire generally, a great number of these tiny farms may be found. Cheshire is a dairy country, with a reputation for cheese (and a reputation is worth money both to land and man). The produce is, therefore, highly sought after in the great towns, Liverpool, etc., and it is worth while to send the cheese twenty miles and more to Manchester.

In the more northern country districts, where a number of great towns lie near each other—Rochdale, Oldham, etc.,—"little takes" abound from six acres upwards in size. One cow to three acres is about the average. The produce, milk, etc., is taken in every day by a horse and cart, and delivered from house to house, the men filling up their time with odd jobs in town. The stone houses are good, comfortable, and clean; the wives are good housewives, swilling down and whitening the paving-stones of the floor, and when work is done with a clean apron and a shawl over their heads, looking very tidy. The climate is rugged, and the gardens are not a strong point. The rent of

the land is from £2 to £2 : 10s. an acre, and the houses from £10 to £12 a year.

That it is the nearness to a market town that makes these succeed appears from the fact that the upland farms are often unlet and tenants difficult to get. Although the prices of milk and butter are much higher than thirty or forty years ago, the rents have not only not increased, but as the rates and taxes have risen in the boroughs, which were and are paid by the landlord, he is really receiving an average of 20 per cent less. Here is one of the many cases where the landlords have not benefited by the rise in prices. On the Belvoir estates there are 337 under twenty acres—another instance of successful small farms.

The great difficulty, however, in increasing the number of these minute holdings is that each must be provided with separate farm buildings, which it seems often expected will grow up of their own accord. The building of "homes," outbuildings, and repairs, always done by the landlord, requires the rents of the small holdings to be quite 30 per cent higher than in the large farms, where one set would suffice for the area of a dozen small ones, to allow for the interest on outlay. "To succeed, the land must be grass," says a very practical authority.

“To grow corn there must be land enough to employ two or more horses ; it does not answer to hire them, and machinery cannot be used.”

In Canada and the United States farmers get their land for nothing ; but unless they have money, which is very unusual, they have to borrow at from 8 to 12 per cent, to build, drain, clear, plant, etc., the interest forming a higher rent than that on an English farm.

How the idea can have sprung up of a landlord enjoying unearned increment, or that the rent is, as it is called, for raw land, is strange indeed. It suffices to look into the accounts of any decently-managed estate, either small or great, to find the answer.

Take a not uncommon instance. An owner has had his property nearly fifty years. During this time there has been an outlay of about £50,000 on permanent improvements, draining, cottages, farmhouses, and buildings, besides the ordinary yearly expenses in keeping them up. During the good years part of the interest of the borrowed money was paid by the farmers. This, of course, with nearly a third of the rents, has lapsed entirely. With regard to the cottages, fifty-three good ones have been built, almost all in the

place of old houses in bad condition. The weekly rent of these is 1s., except for some of the exceptionally good ones, which are 2s. As the cottages pulled down paid 1s., there is absolutely no return for the cost of the new ones; indeed it is found on large estates that the total of the cottier-rents does not do very much more than keep the estate cottages in repair. "It costs £5 before a carpenter and mason are out of the house to do a very little job indeed," said a most conscientious foreman. There has been no extravagant fancy outlay; all that has been done has been to keep good labourers properly housed and the farms in a condition to be worked efficiently—indeed, in many instances, to keep the farmers at all. How the question of housing the labourers is to be solved under the new regime of small properties it is impossible to tell. A good pair cannot be built for much less than £300, the landlord doing all repairs and paying rates and taxes. Even where the rents are higher than in the instance given, the new ones would not pay on an average more than $1\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.

The landlord finds four-fifths of the capital in the shape of dwelling-houses, farm buildings, draining, fences and gates, roads, together with the land

itself, the tenant supplies the other fifth. The rent has been only a moderate interest for money thus tied up, not for the "raw land," as is supposed. There is no other business where such sums could not have been spent to greater money profit, and the interests and influence incident to landed property alone induce men to be satisfied with such pecuniary results. But with present rents landlords will hardly be able to continue to live on their own estates.

Last of the forms in which land is held is the peculiarly English one of allotments, and here, too, the Buckinghamshire village has some extremely instructive experience to offer.

The question has become a burning one, making and unmaking ministries, and used as a party weapon of offence, while few speakers or writers on the subject have taken the pains to refer to that not very recondite form of information, the Parliamentary Blue-Book. In a Report, 1882, by Mr. Druce, one of the assistant agricultural commissioners, he gives the latest intelligence concerning allotments and little takes, having carefully examined fifteen of the Middle and Eastern counties of his district. The five Northern counties may practically be left out of the calculation,

as the condition of farm labourers is there different, and their wants are supplied in a different manner. Wages are very high, and the labourers prosperous; they live to a great extent in the farm-houses, and the farmers give cow-runs (far more healthy for the cow than three or four acres), and a portion of the ploughed manured land for potatoes, a great advantage, as these require more fresh ground than one small patch can give.

“Taking the Midland counties as a whole (he says) almost every village has its allotment ground, ranging from one-eighth to half, and sometimes a whole acre. They are let at reasonable rents, when it is remembered that the holders pay no rates, taxes, or tithe, have no roads or drains to keep up, and no buildings to keep in repair.”

The number of allotments in England is very large—242,342, exclusive, be it remembered, of large gardens. In Leicestershire the number of allotments is greater than that of the labourers—17,168; Northampton, 16,447; Suffolk, 11,664; Warwick, 12,794; Wilts, 16,445; Buckinghamshire, a small county, has 8632. Individual land-owners, such as Lord Tollemache, have whole districts let out in allotments. There are 900 on Lord Pembroke’s Wiltshire estate alone; Mr. Mark

Rolle has 1000; the Duke of Bedford, 2079, etc. It is not, however, the large numbers upon great estates which raise the total to so high a figure as those on the land of smaller proprietors, glebes, common lands, etc., which are to be found almost everywhere.

But it is not in all places that they are found to be popular. In a great number of instances they have been thrown up by the labourers. Lord Fortescue mentions several cases on his own property of good land, which was let at agricultural rents, also that a field close to a village given by his grandfather seventy years ago, rent free, for allotments—every one has been given up; for the men preferred large gardens. At Marsh Gibbon a field of one hundred acres, and another of twenty-five, were divided about forty years ago into plots from one to one and a half acres, with larger takes up to fourteen or fifteen acres in grass. These were all worked out, corn crops having been grown successively with hardly any manure, and the land utterly ruined, when it was let to a farmer for almost nothing. The twenty-five acres were divided between ten or twelve labourers, and also thrown up. Thirty acres of grass land close to the village were cut up into thirty allotments, the last of

which was given up about five years ago. In many cases the labourers part with their portions, and sometimes fourteen or fifteen fall into the hands of one man, showing that the rent was not too high, forming a little farm, to which there is no objection, but proving that the supply exceeded the demand. They are often neglected, and left in a very foul condition; while labourers in general much prefer a large garden near their cottages, the supply of which is very large.

As for small holdings, Mr. Druce declares that "the most remarkable results shown by the tables given in the Reports, in the face of all that has been said about their deficiency in England, is that nearly three-quarters of the farms are of fifty acres and under in size; of the remainder the largest part are from one to three hundred acres."

Mr. Druce considers that the owner is far worse off than the occupier—

"If a man has £1000 to spend, he can buy ten acres of land, and have still sufficient capital to work them; but as a tenant-farmer he can farm one hundred acres with a capital of £10 an acre, and will make more money, as he has the advantage of using his landlord's capital at very low interest, whereas if he buys the land the money is sunk."

The comparison between the results of foreign and English systems, by so competent a judge as Mr. Jenkins, who has studied the question in France, Belgium, Germany, and the North, is thus summed up: "A peasant proprietor does not live half so well as the English labourer, and works twice as hard."

Benjamin Franklin, most democratic of republicans, pronounced, above a hundred years ago, that "He who tries to persuade the workman that he can arrive at fortune otherwise than by industry and thrift is a liar and a criminal." "A true and wise maxim," says a French economist, "which ought indeed to be laid to heart." The schemes now proposed, such as the compulsory supply of allotments, which already exist so largely—systems of public works and public wages, which are now carried out to such an extent in France, and are ruining her finances, the supply of which must, moreover, be exhausted ere long, and thus only to afford temporary relief—*ateliers nationaux*, which brought on the destruction of the French republic of 1848, or for "taking the land and not paying either its rent or its price"—the substitution of small needy farmer owners for the landlords in Ireland, where the possession of land seems hitherto

to be chiefly valued as giving an opportunity for borrowing, and the security of tenure given by Mr. Gladstone's Land Bill of 1870 was the signal for the appearance of the "gombeen man," the local usurer, whose tyranny is described as now so great among Irish tenant farmers—these can be of no avail. They may seriously injure the country, but cannot really benefit the people.

The present distress, agricultural and commercial, extends all over the world ; it is as great or greater in France, the most democratic country in existence ; and in the United States, governed by the people in the widest sense. All classes are suffering ; and it is only by the union of classes, not by setting one against the other, that the crisis can be met. Wrecking shops will not help the town workmen, nor will the agricultural labourer be benefited by the compulsory expropriation of the owners of land for allotments, which have already been provided to so large an extent by the ordinary course of supply and demand since the beginning of the century.¹

In a book by Mr. Wren Hoskyns, sanctioned

¹ In Cobbett's *Rides*, 1820, "the productive and well-cultivated gardens round the cottages" are mentioned as the distinguishing feature of England.

by the Cobden Club, and quoted by Mr. Druce, he says—

“Laws cannot decide as to large or small holdings, no result of argument can bring this within the proper sphere of legislation, which can do no more than remove every obstruction to the wholesome operation of that spontaneous action which regulates the distribution of land by laws as inflexible as those that govern the tides. . . . King Canute (he goes on to say) might well have reversed his chair and spoken also of the littleness of human power when it attempts to govern the laws that *govern the land*.”

III

RURAL ITALY AND PEASANT PROPERTIES

ITALY is constantly spoken of as the garden of Europe, where "fine cooked macaroni rains from heaven and the clusters of grapes are hung with sausages," as a German ballad says; whereas it is forgotten that "Italy is a country of mountains, that the Alps in the north and Apennines down the centre occupy two-thirds of her extent, while the remaining third contains much poor land and barren pastures used only in summer by nomadic herds."

A crisis has lately taken place in Italian agriculture, the condition of which has become so serious that a Government Commission was sent out, which lasted seven years. It divided the country into twelve districts, each of which was examined by a deputy or a senator, and their ad-

mirable reports were published. A final survey of the whole by the President, Count Jacini, completing the evidence, appeared in 1885. It is extremely interesting, though a little long-winded and with many repetitions. Italy has hardly yet begun to feel herself one country, and the "twenty-two cadastral surveys" of the different States seem sometimes to obscure the general picture—"one cannot see the wood for the trees." The form of it—a large quarto, broader than it is long—makes it most uncomfortable reading, and the index is wretched. Her statesmen have certainly not yet attained the ideal of a convenient blue-book. Neither is the synthetic power hers of putting together facts, characteristic of the French mind, which can assimilate and condense an immense German work into a quarter of the size, to the great advantage of mankind.

The reports of the little States might have been considered separately, and the results added up, or the conditions peculiar to each might have been collected under a common head. Neither of these methods has been carried out, and the fatigue of jumping continually from one subject and one district to another is excessive. But, as Dr. Johnson said of the haggis, "there is a great deal

of fine confused feeding in it." There are passages, too, full of a wider philosophy, and a more general study of cause and effect, than is often to be found in blue-books, which remind one of the possibility that in the comity of "nations, the federation of the world," when the Tennysonian prophecy comes true, the share of Italy in the division of labour, which may take place in thought, as it is already doing in things material, will be once again to furnish the world with that philosophy which in the Middle Ages gave her so proud a position.

Meantime we may derive many hints for the consideration of our own perplexities in its pages.

"The agricultural crisis in Italy, which is becoming very serious (says the *Journal des Economistes*), has attracted little attention. The political question has entirely absorbed the interest of Europe. . . . Affairs there, however, are in such a condition that it will soon be asked not whether the climate of Naples is better than that of the Riviera, but whether a new Nihilism or a modified Fenianism is not rising fully armed out of the difficulties with which Italy is beset. . . . Strikes are increasing ; in general they are isolated, but a great movement in 1882, with its headquarters at Cremona, spread all over Lombardy just when

the crops were ripe; the proprietors were at the mercy of the harvestmen, and wages of course had to be raised; farms were burned and various agrarian crimes were committed. Discontent is everywhere prevalent, and there is a general fermentation, which it will require energetic measures to combat."

The immense variety of the problem increases its difficulty. "Agricultural Italy," says Count Jacini, "is no economic unity." Its produce ranges from those of the climates of Edinburgh and Stockholm to those of Cadiz and Smyrna¹—from the most primitive agriculture to that of the most refined objects of cultivation, such as silk, wine, oranges, and dried fruits. The yield varies from 5 francs to 2000 francs the hectare, while all sorts of tenures of land—peasant properties, leases for life, the *métayer* system, etc.—are to be found there. "The country is still suffering from political instability, from changes of all kinds incident to the union of so many little States; but beyond all these difficulties is the condition of the rural population. Poor, miserable, they lead a wretched

¹ The doctor of Prince Eugene once said of Milan: "We have ninety days almost as cold as Edinburgh, and ninety days as hot as Cairo."

existence, to which emigration alone offers a resource; nearly 150,000 Italians quit their country every year.”¹

“Taken as a whole, Italy is one of the countries in Europe where property is most subdivided: out of more than 5,000,000 a great preponderance is of small and middle-sized ownerships.” If, therefore, peasant properties could have prevented the agricultural crisis which is now alarming the country, the remedy was in full operation. With an admirable climate and a tolerably fertile soil, Italy, which ought to be a garden, is now in the saddest situation of any in Europe. The only parts which have proved able to weather the storm are the rich regions near Milan, the zone of gardens round Naples, and the “Conca d’Oro” (the Conchshell), whose concentrated lines meet at the sea on the hills above Palermo and produce oranges, lemons, pomegranates, etc., worth above £30 an acre per year. Many causes are given for the distress. The fall of prices is not peculiar to Italy, but has been felt there more intensely. A few years ago Europe was still furnished with rice from the fields along the valley of the Po. Now

¹ The different returns are: in 1884, 159,000; 1888, 169,100.

rice from India and the extreme East (Burmah) disputes the markets. Sicily and the kingdom of Naples have no longer a monopoly of dried figs, apricots, and the like ; Spain, Turkey, and Egypt are exporting them. Chinese and Japanese silk, which for thousands of years never got beyond their local markets, now undersells Italian silk in London and Lyons. Corn from Russia and the United States has lowered the price in Italy, though she imports but little.

Various diseases have attacked the crops. One destroys the silkworms, the phylloxera and a sort of mildew infest the grapes, and insects have injured the fruit, of which there is an exportation of a milliard and a half. The adulteration of Italian olive oil, which has been mixed with inferior oils, has diminished the demand.

The war taxes continue to be enormous. After twenty years of peace, the Italians are still paying three-tenths ; some parts of Sardinia pay even more. Great confusion and inequality result from following the surveys of the different Italian States ; 2,909,000 owners pay less than 20 lire (the lira is about the same as a franc, twenty-five to the pound sterling) ; those taxed at less than 2 lire a year are excused entirely. One great

cause mentioned of the low state of the country districts happily does not exist with us. The very large majority of middle-class Italians, indeed of owners small and great, insist upon living in the towns—*l'urbomanie*, it is called—and this has become one of the most dangerous customs in the social future of the country. The proprietors do not care to improve their land, but only to draw rents from it. "They know nothing of their labourers, and care nothing for their wants or their sorrows, and an antagonism of classes is the consequence. The dweller in towns looks down upon the peasant as an inferior being.'

One is perpetually reminded of Mr. Browning's picture of "Up in the villa, down in the city:" the longing for

" . . . A house in the City Square—

Ah, such a life, such a life as one leads at the window
there !

Something to see, by Bacchus, something to hear at
least.

There, the whole day long, one's life is a perfect feast ;
While up at a villa one lives, I maintain it, no more
than a beast."

The description of the miserable condition of the labourers is repeated for every State, and it is almost always added : "The condition of the small

proprietors is as bad, in some cases worse. In parts of the Campagna of Rome it can hardly be said that the peasants have a dwelling at all." Perhaps this may be the least evil; for, if they have one, they lie on the ground in unhealthy places, ill fed and deprived of all comfort. "In the *chef-lieu* of the Basilicata two different families were often found in one room, where many individuals of both sexes and all ages found a miserable refuge." Again, in Sardinia "the unhealthiness and smallness of the dwellings are such that persons of all ages and both sexes lie stretched on the same floor, often on straw for want of beds, in company with the pig."

"The most difficult problem indeed to solve, in Italy, is that of the housing of the people. To construct new cottages, or even to restore and bring about decently healthy conditions, is so costly an undertaking, giving, indeed, the smallest immediate return for any expenditure, that in most cases it would be quite impossible to impose it upon the proprietors. The worst hovels are those which belong to the very small owners. The next in badness are those on mortgaged properties. The expense required for rebuilding would often amount to the entire value of the tenement, which

generally constitutes the owner's whole source of income ; the majority of these would rather give them up to the State than attempt to comply with sanitary requirements. If the sad condition of the small and middle-sized properties is considered, and the utter disproportion between the money value of a tenement and the money sunk in building or repairing it, even for large unmortgaged properties, it is impossible to conceive that the reform of cottages in Italy, three-quarters of which are neither decent nor healthy, can be undertaken by individuals."

As the only possible alternative, the Report proposes that the State should either exempt the improvers of rural dwellings from taxation to an amount equal to the interest on money spent, or should lend money at very low interest, the principal being repaid at long terms. This account is very important, as showing difficulties analogous to those with which we are troubled.

The problem is perplexing all countries alike. In France "the last thing a peasant proprietor spends money upon is his house." "Hovels consisting of one room, in which the *cohabitation du cochon*, or of the donkey, is common," "miserable hovels such as peasant owners build for them-

selves," are phrases continually recurring in French Reports. Mr. Chadwick declares that "in France the bad and insanitary condition of the dwellings is such that, with a much better climate than in England, the mortality is far greater than with us." In England it is notorious that the worst and most insanitary cottages belong to men who have erected hovels on "the waste"—*i.e.* the sides of the wide space used by vehicles before hard roads were made (and now unnecessary), taken, of course, without payment—and also to small owners, often little tradesmen in neighbouring towns, who build at the cheapest rate and charge at the highest.

The "Radical Programme" and Mr. Collings's Bill settle the question very summarily for England. "Land is to be acquired compulsorily where necessary, on which houses are to be built, the expense to be borne by a rate on the owners of property in the district." Then comes the fate of the large landowner, who we have shortly before been informed is mortgaged up to the hilt. He has already had to part with land "if necessary" by force, and to pay the rate. "It would be quite safe and just to demand that two cottages be built to every hundred acres of pasture land, and three to every hundred acres of mixed arable and pasture, each

cottage to cost £200, to pay $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent," so that the rent would be £7 a year. Take an estate of 5000 acres, mixed arable and pasture, as indeed all such must be; 150 cottages at £200 each demand £30,000. As the landowner has rarely anything to live on except his rents, he must borrow for this; and as no one would lend it on a mortgaged estate, he must get it from the Lands Improvement Company, who charge $6\frac{1}{2}$ per cent, including the repayment of the principal. The rent is compulsorily fixed, and (as it is quite truly said), £7 being "quite beyond the power of the labourer to pay," the landowner is to be "compelled to attach not less than half an acre of land, for which the man is to pay threepence a week," and "he is to have it at his door!"

"Good loam I choose, nigh to my house and handy;
Let Smith's be sandy,"

says "three acres and a cow" ballad. The landlord will thus have to furnish 75 acres of land, "all close" to his 150 cottages, and as land does not come down from the moon, it must be taken from the farmers around by compulsion. As all of it is to lie close to the houses, it is accommodation land, for which large rents are generally given, which

would of course cease, as will the rents for cottages pulled down.

No scheme is given for compelling great mill-owners, iron-masters, dockyard owners, and other large employers of labour possessing house property, to provide thus for their men, who equally require homes, while the artisan lodgings are notoriously bad, nor are shareholders in the funds, in railroads, etc., called on to contribute; the exaction is only from landowners. It is difficult to conceive such airy disposal of other people's property being solemnly written down, except that, besides the ignorance of town writers and town readers on such matters, it is true in England as in Italy that "the superstition exists (says the Report) which regards landowners as privileged beings, rich as Vanderbilt, not obliged to spend anything, and therefore to be subjected to all the expense required by agricultural competition, and to the caprices of extravagant communal administrations, while they are considered morally obliged to fulfil all the duties of an ambulating charitable establishment. . . . In the Italy of to-day property is immensely subdivided and changes hands continually, while large proprietors are the exception; yet the press, when treating of agrarian questions,

speaks of landlords as if they were few, all large, and a caste such as existed in the time of Louis XV.; the truth being that the real lords of riches and influence are no longer the landlords, but the bankers."

"Large properties are sometimes supposed to be a cause of evil in Italy; the reports are of a different opinion," says the *Journal des Economistes*. "Apulia is said to resemble England in the size of the holdings, the prosperity of the large farmers, and the good crops raised." "In Umbria and the Marches the peasants are comparatively prosperous and moral, peasant properties are few. Here irrigation, etc., is not unknown." In another place "the wretched small farmers of Liguria, Piedmont, and even the rich valley of the Po, where property is subdivided more minutely even than in France," are spoken of. In the Roman provinces, the Marquis Vitelleschi says, "the land is cut up into minute divisions, fettered by collective ownerships, and burdened by privileges. In the first division alone there are 122,633 peasant properties averaging under two and a half acres, *i.e.* a hectare. There are hardly any means of communication; seventy communes are without highways. The peasants know nothing and care for nothing; they

are without morality or education. A bit of land is their only ambition, which passes into other hands if they falter for a moment in the desperate struggle for existence."

"Peasant properties are 25 per cent of the whole, and the amount of poverty and ignorance seems to be proportionate to the small or large number of them in the different districts."

An extremely interesting point is to trace the "survivals" still common in Italy of the gradual passage of the ownership of land from the unenclosed state, where it belonged to the tribe, the township, or the mark, which Mr. Freeman says is equivalent to the village. This early stage evidently existed in Sardinia up to 1839, "and rendered cultivation almost impossible." Feudal privileges were then abolished by Charles Albert, and property became free; but it was soon seen that, until a country was enclosed, agriculture could not exist—a maxim entirely contrary to the new doctrine of the wickedness of enclosing wastes and commons.

"The first step was to withdraw portions from the common pasturage by hedges and stone walls. This reform was carried out with great difficulty; public opinion was opposed to it, the enclosure of

a field was considered as a theft on all, and a spoliation which it was only just to oppose with violence. In some districts the walls raised during the day were destroyed at night. It would have been a blessing, however, if the legal sanction obtained at that time could have been used even by force, but in the general poverty there were no means of resistance. After this first step, however, the law of 1851 asserted the liberty of the unenclosed ground, and restored to the proprietors the whole of their rights. The law was an excellent reaction against wandering pasturage, and Sardinia has gained in security and the progress of agriculture. A law has been passed to suppress free pasturage on the communal land, but it is not yet carried out for fear of outbreaks. The consequence of the past order of things has been that Sardinia is still in a wild state, requiring to be cleared. Only a twelfth part of the whole is under culture; the agriculture is most behindhand, and roads hardly to be found. . . . True property in land, indeed, only dates in Sardinia from 1853, before which time owners were obliged to leave those parts of the land which were not sown for general pasture, on which the shepherds fed their flocks gratuitously. Cases were not rare of men with 200

sheep not possessing an inch of ground, and a tax was obliged to be made limiting the number which could be fed in this way. . . . As to the system of communal pasturage (says the Report), this pre-adamite form of existence is incompatible with agricultural progress, and must disappear. In Umbria, in consequence of the existence of such property, devastated mountains are common. Tracts of land in the Apennines are completely abandoned, and in the hands of a few peasants, who quarrel over the use of the little that is left. These promiscuous rights and usages must be limited as much as possible. . . . In Sardinia no farms, whether great or small, could subsist if the shepherds possessed any number of sheep; those who have even only four or five have a range assigned to them. These communal pasturages are destitute of everything—water, wells, shelter, etc.—the result of which is a great loss of cattle. In Switzerland the communal property has been diminished by half, without any damage to the breeding of animals. Agriculture is greatly damaged by the wandering shepherds, who, however few sheep they may possess, damage the rest of the communal land as well as that of private persons, in consequence of the absence of fences.”

It is advised that communal pastures and mountains be sold. An exception is made, however, in favour of the Alpine pastures in central Italy, which are useful for summer feed.

"A quarter of the soil in South Italy belongs to the communes, to charitable institutions, and the State; other great properties have indeed entirely disappeared. The whole of this is wretchedly administered and almost valueless. One hundred and seventy-seven thousand hectares belonging to the communes in Aquila are worth 3 francs the hectare. Fifty-four thousand hectares of the same kind in Bari bring a maximum of 34 francs; the land is occupied by wretched pastures, and by forests in a bad condition, almost worthless."

As long as property is in the condition of belonging thus to anybody and nobody, no man is sufficiently interested about the land to spend money in improving it, and it is not till property has become personal that any real agriculture appears possible.

"As to the forests with which in old days the uplands were covered, these were not only valuable for timber, but fed the rivers, prevented floods, and provided against the defect of rainfall. The avidity and want of foresight of past generations

have destroyed the greater portion of the trees. Storms have carried off the thin coating of earth, no longer kept up by the roots, so that the forests cannot grow again, and still less any crops. The hillsides are burnt up and present a monotonous aspect of sterility and desolation, while we are annually buying timber to the amount of 32,000,000 francs. The garden of nature has become an ironical word. The torrents, which are no longer restrained, increase the marshes in the valleys and plains, and malaria has rendered districts uninhabitable which were described as proverbially fertile in ancient history. . . ."

The deplorable condition of the Tuscan mountains, thus carelessly denuded of forests, sounds indeed dismal to our ears, remembering the picture in *Paradise Lost*—

"Thick as autumnal leaves that strow the brooks
In Vallombrosa, where the Etrurian shades
High over-arched imbower."

"The difficulties connected with the disforestation of the mountain-sides have become so serious that Government is called upon to interfere. Private property there is so excessively subdivided that it is quite impossible for the little owners to under-

take replanting. Woods are indispensable for preserving the moisture and bridling the flow of the waters; great spaces require to be covered with vegetation. This can only be done by Government, but it is proposed to relieve from taxation for fifty years and more any who will replant the forests, the State to receive a certain sum at the end of the time. The sale of woods is to be discouraged by Government, as too often they are only bought to cut down and sell, after which the bare earth is left in a deplorable state of neglect.

"On whatever side we turn, we hear nothing but complaints; agricultural Italy feels her present poverty, and dreads a future which threatens to be worse. The landowners can no longer cultivate to advantage; the working classes are unhappy and complain; the Government feels that a new social problem of imminent danger has arisen. The populations in the country are more wretched than in the past—not that their condition is worse, but that thirty or forty years ago they had no aspirations for change, whereas now they expect a rise similar to that which has taken place in the political order of things."

Besides which a madness (*mania*) of change and

of rising in the world has taken possession of the people.

In the southern districts brigandage "profits by the administrative disorder, and is excited by the misery of the benighted populations which people the country."

The whole history of the peasants is melancholy in the extreme—slaves under the old Roman dominion; next, serfs attached to the soil; then free, but subjected to all sorts of vexations on the part of the little tyrants of the country almost to the present day.

"But the small proprietors are no better off, most of them, particularly in the mountains, lodging with their whole family in one smoky room, with their pigs, their goats, and their chickens. They would die of hunger if they did not go down into the plains for three or four months in the year to work either in the town or the country. The small proprietors are gradually disappearing in certain parts of Italy from three causes—bad years, and the difficulties of hiring and letting land, increasing mortgages, and enormous taxation. In Mantua, where, in 1871, they were 39,868, they were only 35,535 in 1879. In eight years 4513 had disappeared. A great number

had been sold up for arrears of taxation, but a diminution of this could not remedy such a situation ; much more is wanted."

The misery is aggravated by the conscription. 140,000 men are drawn every year, many of them at the most inconvenient time. Military service is compulsory up to the age of 32.

"Italy as an agricultural country is one of the least favoured by the spontaneous gifts of nature. Primitive agriculture, without machines, is sure to succumb, while the labourers on it lead a miserable life, although in the country they are extremely industrious. The agrarian problem, however, is far more vast than any technical questions of agriculture. The chief difficulties arise from an extreme deficiency of capital to carry out the improvements necessary in agriculture, the general indebtedness, and the small production obtained from the soil, contrasted with the overpowering number of cultivators and owners to be found in the country."

Here, again, experience is against the new order of land reformers, who are always insisting upon increasing the number of labourers, "restoring the land to the people," etc.

"The effect of this system in France (says M.

Lafargue¹) has been that, in order to obtain a produce from the land of less than half, there have been a quadruple number of hands employed. It has been as many as 25,000,000, and there are still from eighteen to twenty millions as against from five to six in England; and this though our climate and geographical position are much superior to those of England, and we can produce wine, oil, and fruit, which they cannot. A scientific and intelligent division of labour, the best possible employment of land, cattle, time, capital, and machines, are quite impossible in great subdivision of property."

"In our system of *morcellement*, the peasant tries above all to get everything out of his land, and to have no money to spend." Here as in France, indeed, there can be no worse customers for the manufactures of a country than a population of peasant proprietors. Whether the land is fit for it or not, say the Italian and French Reports over and over again, they will grow vines, olives, maize, and corn to sell, and hemp, barley for chickens, potatoes for pigs, oats for horses, and vegetables for use.

"Promiscuous culture, which tries to grow a little of everything, results in producing nothing

¹ *Relèvement de l'Agriculture.*

well." "Facility of communication has destroyed the advantages of being self-sufficing, and enables the producers to grow only what the land is most fitted for and to buy the rest. Specialisation is the great feature of modern agricultural progress, and the same ground will often, under such a change, increase four or five times in value." The *métayer* system of dividing the profits is a great obstacle to such improvements; the expense of substituting vines for flax would cost 3000 or 4000 lire the hectare. Only an absolute proprietor, cultivating for himself, could undertake such an expense. The *métayer* always cultivates all sorts of things at once, in order that, if one fails, he may fall back on another. The produce of corn in Italy, which makes us blush, amounts only to 11 hectolitres the hectare, while in England it is 32, in the German Empire 23, in Holland 22, in Belgium 20, and only 15 in France. "Our piecemeal agriculture without machines must fail, and machines are perfectly impossible with extremely small properties. Not only would the cost be as much as the value of the land, but no machine could act in such extremely small limits, where now even a wooden plough tied to the horns of a couple of half-wild

oxen has difficulty in turning." The time and trouble wasted by these short furrows is said by experienced agriculturists to make the difference between a small profit and none at all in the extremely narrow margin only possible at present.

It would be difficult to exaggerate the miserable condition of the agricultural population in Italy as described here, the wretched dwellings, the unwholesome food, the amount of disease, the low wages, the want of morality and of education. The diseases induced by insanitary conditions are fearful. In the "pellagra, which is akin to leprosy, the body dries up and wastes away, the skin grows yellow and black and is covered with scales ; it loses all feeling, so that a prick or cut is scarcely perceived ; finally, the patient, inert, apathetic, motionless, half dead, with sunken eyes, becomes a mere mummy, unconsciously awaiting the opening of his grave. It is sometimes said to arise from excessive poverty and starvation, but," says the Report, 'why are there so many villages where the country people are almost dying of hunger without a single case, while it is found in others not worse lodged and fed ?' The probable cause is the use of putrid and mouldy maize, often exchanged by the millers for better corn, but also

brought in from abroad ; the bread is made into enormous loaves, baked thus to save firing, the inside of which grows putrid before the week's end, which they are intended to last.

"Other diseases, though less heard of, are quite as numerous—scrofula, chest complaints, and, in some valleys, cretinism." It sounds strange in our ears to talk of consumption as one of the scourges which desolate Italy, of which we have considered the North to have a sad monopoly. Malaria and fevers of different kinds are extremely common in Latium, Lombardy, and other parts. Tertian fevers are as dangerous as the pellagra in the Roman Campagna and the irrigated country in Lombardy. "Where marshes exist man cannot live. If he does not destroy the marsh, the marsh destroys him."

"The excessively divided property in parts of Italy is such as to reduce it to a mere proletariat of owners, abominably lodged and ill nourished, who could not possibly carry out any sanitary improvements, even if decreed by the law. Health and morality are inseparably bound up together ; for instance, about Rome there is a zone of small properties amounting to about 20,000 acres. Here the want of water, of proper houses, and of culti-

vation, and the total absence of roads at the very gates of the Eternal City, greatly diminishes the value of the soil."

The result is curious as told by a Catholic observer. "The few times when the peasants earn money they drink to excess, so as to be seen rolling on the ground; they have no morality, and live in abominable vice. Education is almost *nil*. In place of religion there is the grossest superstition; children are taught to go to church as horses and dogs are drilled; the men gabble Latin prayers and have no notion of duty. By a few observances bad women and brigands contrive to consider themselves very religious." Wages are from 10d. to 1s. a day, but there are nearly a hundred festival days. Farm servants, who are clothed and fed, have from 4s. to 6s., the women from 1s. to 3s. a month.

The condition of the small proprietor is even inferior to that of the labourers. Half the children die under seven years old in the Marches. The families live together, sometimes to the number of forty. The food is wretched, bread bad, without salt, made of maize, beans, and sometimes even acorns, with but little wheat.

The account of the island of Sardinia is even

worse. Wages are from 8d. to 10d. Men may be seen wandering in the fields picking up herbs to eat. The little proprietors are quite as wretched. Animals which die of disease are eaten under the notion that fire purifies the flesh; healthy beasts are kept for the market. Neither the peasant proprietors nor the labourers, most of whom leave their homes to work in gangs during some months of the year in order to live, ever bring back their money; they eat and drink it, and give way to all sorts of excesses, so that the families do not benefit at all.

The excessive hard work which the small properties entail upon the women appears at every turn. The wife's position is such in the central provinces that it is said "women are bargained for like cattle and toil like Indian squaws." No one, indeed, who has seen that dreadful human being an Italian peasant old woman—wrinkled, decrepit, squalid, with three hairs on the top of her bare skull as her only head-gear—can doubt the severe life of toil and privation to which she has been condemned.

One result of the excessive poverty is that rural thefts are increasing, and are committed by fathers in the presence of their children. "It is

the parents who teach the children the path to crime," said the judge of Ravanusa. In the centre and south of Italy thefts are so common as to be a serious obstacle to cultivation.¹ In Latium, the Marches, the Neapolitan territory, fruit, grapes, olives, corn, vegetables, and even cattle are stolen, and flocks are led to pasture upon other people's lands. To steal wood is not considered dishonourable in the Marches. The stolen wood is sold publicly at prices which do not pay for the cutting down and the transport. Public opinion is in favour of the thief when taken by the law. The grapes for the vintage must be picked before they are ripe, greatly to the detriment of their value, or there would not be a bunch left in many provinces.

One very original mode of theft is mentioned. When the grain is threshed, the peasant girls walk round the heap praying for the blessing of Heaven upon the corn, and picking up a handful surrep-

¹ To praise one's country is not considered effective, but it must be allowed a little bit of village glorification. H. was riding past some of his cottages where a splendid crop of apples, just ripe, hung in the half garden, half orchard. "I think, John, I would fasten a dog to one of the trees till the apples are picked," said he. "What, Sir H—, you a magistrate," answered John, laughing, but a little proud, "and not know that nobody ever steals an apple in the three C—ns!"

titionously as they pass ; the prayers are ended when the aprons are full.

“In Sicily it is almost a proverb that in every peasant you see a man capable of theft. The miserable condition of their dwellings is one cause of this.” And, again, it is said “the health and the morality of a nation depend on each other.”

The difficulty of entrusting power to local boards, a course which we seem about to adopt to a great extent, is much insisted on.

“It is impossible to abandon regulations concerning drainage, sanitary questions, roads, etc., to the caprices of communal administration, while the State could perhaps not make rules wisely applicable to such different conditions as those in different parts of Italy. Probably the most feasible unit would be the province, which should consult the communes as to what is required, but which must receive the sanction of Government before these can become law.”

Another perplexing point is the enormous amount of mortgages upon all properties both great and small. “The small cultivators are ruined by the usurers ; complaints are unanimous.” “The interest in Sicily and Sardinia is usurious, sometimes 25 per cent. It is 12 per cent in the

Veronese districts." "Small loans to farmers are habitually lent at 60 per cent in the Roman provinces." "In Apulia short loans are charged at 120 per cent interest." A kind of public loan institution was begun by Cavour in 1853, but it seems to do as much harm as good ; the interest is called 5 per cent, but, as the principal is repaid in a fixed time, it amounts to 7. About Mantua it is said that the "institutions for agricultural credit will finish by ruining themselves after having ruined agriculture."

Then comes the question, how can these penniless owners pay for hiring labour?

"If individuals cannot guarantee work to the labourers, is it supposed to be possible that the State could do so? If the farmers and owners can only employ labour at a loss in the present state of things, who is to compel them to this loss? Can any one desire to repeat the experiment of national workshops instituted by the Paris Republic in 1848, and which ended in blood?"

These are important considerations incidentally introduced. Again—

"The abstract question whether large, medium, or small properties are preferable is an entirely idle discussion in a country of free trade. That

extent is best which enables the greatest amount of produce to be got out of the soil—large owner-ships where the agricultural conditions make the use of machinery profitable, smaller ones where the amount of labour required for the crop, as with vines, silk, olives, and market gardens, constitutes the chief value of the land.”

Of late, nevertheless, the diseases both of the vines and the silkworms and the low prices of agricultural produce have reduced the peasant proprietors to the greatest straits in France and Italy.

The prospects for the future, however, given in the Report, are more hopeful than might have been expected from the state of things described in the body of the work—

“Still a commercial and industrial revival is now certain for Italy. It is greatly a question of geography. Italy is a mighty promontory, thrown into the middle of the Mediterranean Sea, and from the earliest times her fortunes in the development of civilisation have followed its fate. The discoveries of Columbus and Vasco di Gama displaced the current of modern commerce, and the Turkish conquests reduced the Mediterranean almost to the conditions of a canal. After the fall of the

Italian republics of the Middle Ages, and the disappearance of Arabian civilisation, its shores became desert, inhospitable, squalid, and infested by the Barbary pirates. Commerce and manufacture ceased, agriculture was limited to home consumption, and to a few productions of luxury, such as silk and fruit. The opening, however, of the Suez Canal has brought back commerce to its ancient course, fourfold indeed in quantity, so that the Mediterranean will once again become the centre of the economical activity of the globe, when Italy must, of course, benefit enormously."

Such a result would be welcome to all who remember how much the world has owed to Italy, to her art, in pictures, sculpture, and architecture, her music, her poetry, her science and philosophy. We cannot afford that so potent a factor in our common civilisation should lie dormant. Italy has of late been overweighted by her material cares and necessities, but if a good time is indeed coming for her, in all ways Europe would very truly have reason to rejoice.

IV

RURAL LIFE IN RUSSIA

THE system of land tenure in Russia at present combines in a singular manner the results of the scheme of a benevolent despot for supplying each peasant with sufficient land to live upon, and the remains still unbroken of the rigid rule of the old village communities to which he continues subject. These, as Mr. Seeböhm shows, at one time occupied the whole of Europe, but are now only to be found surviving in the Russian "Mir."

The amount of territory given up to the serfs by the Emancipation Act of 1861 was about one-half of the arable land of the whole empire, so that the experiment of cutting up the large properties of a country, and the formation instead of a landed peasantry, has now been tried on a sufficiently large scale for a quarter of a century to enable the world to judge of its success or failure.

There is no doubt of the philanthropic intentions of Alexander the First, but he seems to have also aimed (like Richelieu) at diminishing the power of the nobles, which formed some bulwark between the absolute sway of the Crown and the enormous dead level of peasants.

The serfs belonged soul and body to the land-owner: even when they were allowed to take service or exercise a trade in distant towns, they were obliged to pay a due, "obrok," to their owner, and to return home if required; while the instances of oppression were sometimes frightful, husbands and wives were separated, girls were sold away from their parents, young men were not allowed to marry.¹ On the other hand, when the proprietor was kind, and rich enough not to make money out of his serfs, the patriarchal form of life was not unhappy. "See now," said an old peasant, "what have I gained by the emancipation? I have nobody to go to to build my house, or to help in the ploughing time; the seigneur, he knew what I wanted, and he did it for me without any bother. Now if I want a wife, I have got to go and court her myself: he used to choose for me,

¹ "I sold two capital girls last year as laundresses for two hundred roubles each," says an old lady in Gogol's story.

and he knew what was best. It is a great deal of trouble and no good at all!" Under the old arrangement three generations were often found living in one house, and the grandfather, who was called the "Big One," bore a very despotic sway. The plan allowed several of the males of the family to seek work at a distance, leaving some at home to perform the "corvée" (forced labour) three days a week; but the families quarrelled among themselves, and the effect of the emancipation has everywhere been to split them up into different households. A considerable portion of the serfs were not really serfs at all. They were coachmen, grooms, gardeners, gamekeepers, etc., while their wives and daughters were nurses, ladies'-maids, and domestic servants. Their number was out of all proportion to their work, which was always carelessly done, but there was often great attachment to the family they served. The serfs proper lived in villages, had houses and plots of land of their own, and were nominally never sold except with the estate. The land, however, was under the dominion of the "Mir." They could neither use it nor cultivate it except according to the communal obligations.

The outward aspect of a Russian village is not

attractive, and there is little choice in the surrounding country between a wide gray plain with a distance of scrubby pine forest, or the scrubby pine forest with distant gray plains. The peasants' houses are scattered up and down without any order or arrangement, and with no roads between, built of trunks of trees, unsquared, and mortised into each other at the corners, the interstices filled with moss and mud, a mode of building warmer than it sounds. In the interior there is always an enormous brick stove, five or six feet high, on which and on the floor the whole family sleep in their rags. The heat and the stench are frightful. No one undresses, washing is unknown, and sheep-skin pelisses with the wool inside are not conducive to cleanliness. Wood, however, is becoming very scarce, the forests are used up in fuel for railway engines, for wooden constructions of all kinds, and are set fire to wastefully. In many places the peasants are forced to burn dung, weeds, or anything they can pick up. Fifty years, it is said, will exhaust the present forests, and fresh trees are never planted. Measures are at last being taken by Government to stop the waste.

The women are more diligent than the men, and the hardest work is often turned over to them,

as is generally the case in countries where peasant properties prevail. "They are only the females of the male," and have few womanly qualities. They toil at the same tasks in the field as the men, ride astride like them, often without saddles, and the mortality is excessive among the neglected children, who are carried out into the fields, where the babies lie the whole day with a bough over them and covered with flies, while the poor mother is at work. Eight out of ten children are said to die before ten years old in rural Russia.

In the little church (generally built of wood) there are no seats, the worshippers prostrate themselves and knock their heads two or three times on the ground, and must stand or kneel through the whole service. The roof consists of a number of bulbous-shaped cupolas ; four, round the central dome, in the form of a cross is the completed ideal, with a separate minaret for the Virgin. These are covered with tiles of the brightest blue, green, and red, and gilt metal. The priest is a picturesque figure, with his long unclipped hair, tall felt hat largest at the top, and a flowing robe. He must be married when appointed to a cure, but is not allowed a second venture if his wife dies. Until lately they formed an hereditary

caste, and it was unlawful for the son of a pope to be other than a pope. They are taken from the lowest class, and are generally quite as uneducated, and are looked down upon by their flocks. "One loves the Pope, and one the Popess," is an uncomplimentary proverb given by Gogol. "To have priest's eyes," meaning to be covetous or extortionate, is another. The drunkenness in all classes strikes Russian statesmen with dismay, and the priests, the popes, are among the worst delinquents. They are fast losing the authority which they once had over the serfs, when they formed part of the great political system of which the Czar was the religious and political head. A Russian official Report says that "the churches are now mostly attended by women and children, while the men are spending their last kopeck, or getting deeper into debt, at the village dram shop."

Church festivals, marriages, christenings, burials, and fairs, leave only two hundred days in the year for the Russian labourer. The climate is so severe as to prevent out-of-door work for months, and the enforced idleness increases the natural disposition to do nothing. "We are a lethargic people," says Gogol, "and require a stimulus from without, either that of an officer, a master, a driver,

the rod, or vodki (a white spirit distilled from corn); and this," he adds in another place, "whether the man be peasant, soldier, clerk, sailor, priest, merchant, seigneur, or prince." At the time of the Crimean War it was always believed that the Russian soldier could only be driven up to an attack, such as that of Inkerman, under the influence of intoxication. The Russian peasant is indeed a barbarian at a very low stage of civilisation. In the Crimean hospitals every nationality was to be found among the patients, and the Russian soldier was considered far the lowest of all. Stolid, stupid, hard, he never showed any gratitude for any amount of care and attention, or seemed, indeed, to understand them; and there was no doubt that during the war he continually put the wounded to death in order to possess himself of their clothes.

The Greek Church is a very dead form of faith, and the worship of saints of every degree of power "amounts to a fetishism almost as bad as any to be found in Africa." I myself am the happy possessor of a little rude wooden bas-relief, framed and glazed, of two saints whose names I have ungratefully forgotten, to whom if you pray as you go out to commit a crime, however heinous, you take your pardon with you—a refinement upon the

whipping of the saints in Calabria, and Spanish hagiolatry. The icons, the sacred images, are hung in the chief corner, called "The Beautiful," of a Russian "Isba." A lamp is always lit before them, and some food spread "for the ghosts to come and eat." The well-to-do peasant is very "strict about his fasts and festivals, and never neglects to prepare for Lent. During the whole year his forethought never wearies; the children pick up a number of fungi, which the English kick away as toadstools: these are dried in the sun or the oven, and packed in casks with a mixture of hot water and dry meal in which they ferment. The staple diet of the peasant consists of buckwheat, rye meal, sauerkraut, and coarse cured fish" (little, however, but black bread, often mouldy, and sauerkraut, nearly putrid, is found in the generality of Russian peasant-homes). No milk, butter, cheese, or eggs are allowed in Lent, all of which are permitted to the Roman Catholic, and the oil the peasant uses for his cooking is linseed instead of olive oil, which last he religiously sets aside for the lamps burning before the holy images. "To neglect fasting would cause a man to be shunned as a traitor, not only to his religion, but to his class and country."

In a bettermost household, the samovar, the tea-urn, is always going. If a couple of men have a bargain to strike, the charcoal is lighted inside the urn, which has a pipe carried into the stone chimney, and the noise of the heated air is like a roaring furnace. They will go on drinking boiling hot weak tea, in glasses, for hours, with a liberal allowance of vodka. The samovar, however, is a completely new institution, and the old peasants will tell you, "Ah, Holy Russia has never been the same since we drank so much tea."

The only bit of art or pastime to be found among the peasants seems to consist in the "circling dances" with songs, at harvest, Christmas, and all other important festivals, as described by Mr. Ralston. And even here "the settled gloom, the monotonous sadness," are most remarkable. Wife-beating, husbands' infidelities, horrible stories of witches and vampires, are the general subjects of the songs. The lament of the young bride who is treated almost like a slave by her father and mother in law, has a chorus: "Thumping, scolding, never lets his daughter sleep," "Up, you slattern! up, you sloven, sluggish slut!" A wife entreats: "Oh, my husband, only for good cause beat thou

thy wife, not for little things. Far away is my father dear, and farther still my mother."

The husband who is tired of his wife sings: "Thanks, thanks to the blue pitcher (*i.e.* poison), it has rid me of my cares; Not that cares afflicted me, my real affliction was my wife," ending, "Love will I make to the girls across the stream." Next comes a wife who poisons her husband. "I dried the evil root and pounded it small;" but in this case the husband was hated because he had killed her brother. The most unpleasant of all, however, are the invocations to vodka. A circle of girls imitate drunken women, and sing as they dance, "Vodki delicious I drank, I drank; not in a cup or a glass, but a bucketful I drank. . . . I cling to the posts of the door. Oh, doorpost, hold me up, the drunken woman, the tipsy rogue."

The account of the Baba Zaga, a hideous old witch, is enough to drive children into convulsions.

"She has a nose and teeth made of strong sharp iron. As she lies in her hut she stretches from one corner to the other, and her nose goes through the roof. The fence is made of the bones of the people she has eaten, and tipped with their skulls. The uprights of the gate are human legs. She has a broom to sweep away the traces of her footprints,

over the snow in her seven-leagued boots. She steals children to eat them."

Remains of paganism are to be found in some of the sayings. A curse still existing says, "May Perun (*i.e.* the lightning) strike thee." The god Perun, the Thunderer, resembles Thor, and like him carries a hammer. He has been transformed into Elijah, the prophet Ilya, the rumbling of whose chariot as he rolls through heaven may be heard in thunder, especially on the week in summer when his festival falls. There is a dismal custom by which the children are made to eat the mouldy bread, "because the Rusalkas (the fairies) do not choose bread to be wasted." Inhuman stories about burying a child alive in the foundation of a new town to propitiate the earth spirit; that a drowning man must not be saved, lest the water spirit be offended; that if groans or cries are heard in the forest, a traveller must go straight on without paying any attention, "for it is only the wood demon, the *lyeshey*," seem only to be invented as excuses for selfish inaction. Wolves bear a great part in the stories. In one a peasant driving in a sledge with three children is pursued by a pack of wolves: he throws out a child, which they stop to devour; then the howls come near him again, and

he throws out a second ; again they return, when the last is sacrificed ; and it is a grief to hear that he saves his own wretched cowardly life at last.

The account of rural Russian life given in a book called *Dead Souls*, by Gogol, which is considered a Russian classic, is dismal in the extreme. Land in Russia has hardly any value in itself, and the property of the landowners was estimated by the number of serfs, called "souls," whose labour alone has rendered the land valuable. (It is after all a more human way of speaking of the peasants than our own counting of "hands;" the women, however, were not considered "souls.") The possessor of 200 or 300 was a small man ; 2000 seem to have placed the owner among the large proprietors. The hero Tchitchikof (it has been said that to give a good sneeze and end with "off" makes a very tolerable Russian name) is a small functionary on the usual meagre salary, which is as in all cases eked out by an unblushing receipt of bribes. As everybody, however, is bribed, he finds his share too small to get the luxuries for which he pants. Money, however, he knows, is lent by Government on the serfs and land possessed by an owner. The serfs are only numbered in the

census every ten years, while a tax was paid on them dead or alive; and it suddenly strikes him that he may buy the "dead souls," undertaking to pay the tax and then borrow on the security. "If it is objected that he has no estate to take them to, he says that he is going to colonise in the Taurus or the Chersonese, which is a very praiseworthy enterprise." He goes to a small country town, with his two serfs, one of them a coachman, three horses and a britska, which appears to be almost indispensable for even so poor a man, and he gradually makes his way among the officials, getting introductions among the country owners. "The nobles possessed land, but did not live upon it; there was nothing like the life of an English country gentleman on his estate." He then goes from house to house, and the result is a description of every variety of village and estate, over a great part of Russia, which read like sketches from nature, and have all the exactness of photographs. They are melancholy indeed. An opening picture of the scenery is very vivid—

"As soon as he left the town the savage condition in which all the communications were left became apparent. On each side the road, ankle deep in dust in summer, knee deep in mud in bad

weather, lay lines of mole-hills, fir-woods, with tufts of shabby trees, stumps of old trunks which had been burnt by fire, wild heaths, bogs, etc. The villages here were in two perfectly parallel lines, looking like stacks of wood, with roofs of gray planks, the edges cut out as if in paper. The peasants as usual lounged about on planks raised on two blocks, yawning under their sheepskin pelisses. Women, their waists under their arm-pits, looked out of the upper unglazed windows, while a calf or a pig might be seen gazing from the stable below."

Next comes an owner's establishment. "The house was perched on a bare hill, or rather slope, with scarcely a bush; an arbour, however, painted green, and called 'Temple of Solitary Meditation,' stood on the bank. Farther off was a pond, or rather a mass of mud, green with weeds, in which two women, having turned up their clothes, were standing up to their knees, dragging out a net containing two crabs and a perch. More than two hundred little black hovels, without trees or bushes or green of any kind above them, with nothing but broken wood darkened by the weather, lay beyond. Outside the house Tchitchikof finds the husband, lounging about in

a dirty silk dressing-gown, smoking a long pipe touching the ground, and doing nothing from morning till night. Within reigned the greatest disorder; the cooking was abominable, the provisions always ran short, the household servants were dirty, and generally half tipsy, those in the courtyard slept twelve hours in the day, and committed all sorts of fooleries during the other twelve. 'And why? because Mme. Maniloff was *bien élevée*; and good education is given (as everybody knows) in young ladies' schools, and in young ladies' schools (as everybody knows) three things are taught, which constitute the basis of all human virtue: French, which is indispensable to the happiness of family life; the piano, to charm the leisure hours of the husband (when he shall come); and, finally, household management, properly so called, which consists in knitting purses and preparing pretty little surprises for birthdays, etc. There are different programmes and different schools: sometimes the first thing considered is the science of housekeeping, the cigar cases and bead work, and French and music only come afterwards, or music may be the first necessity. There are programmes and programmes, methods and methods, but nothing beyond these three.' "

At this house Tchitchikof gets his dead souls for nothing. He then visits a score of other properties, in most of which he makes himself useful and lives at free quarters while he negotiates his purchases.

One belongs to a miser, a man of large property and a thousand souls. The windows of the house are all shut up, excepting the two rooms which he inhabits. His peasants are so miserable that between seventy and eighty have run away. It was difficult, however, for a serf in such circumstances to keep clear of the police; they could not find work, and were often starved into returning to their misery. The master lived on sour cabbage and gruel, like his barefoot servants, who stand in rags about the courtyard. Tchitchikof offers to buy the fugitives at thirty-two kopecks (about tenpence) a head, and gets them for fifty, after a great deal of bargaining.

Another picture of the country is striking—

“The britska drove on. The country was flat and bare. What is seen on such occasions is that there is nothing to be seen. Milestones which show the kilometres of the past and announce the kilometres of the future, lines of carts, villages, gray masses varied with samovars, decrepit old

men and women lounging in the roads, men shod with the bark of the lime or the birch, their legs swathed in rags. Little towns built with unhewn trunks, without planks—then open country with patches of ground green with meadows, yellow with gold, marked with furrows in the open desert. Then a peasant song heard in the farthest distance, peals of church bells, and farther still clouds of flies, multitudes of grasshoppers, flights of crows, the tops of fir-trees, oceans of fog darkening a score of different points on a horizon which seems to have no other limits." "Boundless as the sea" is not a comparison which occurs to a Russian.

Everywhere the lists of dead serfs which Tchitchikof obtains are made out for him with the utmost elaboration, their trades, their qualities, their height, the colour of their eyes, and their nicknames, such as "Lazy Peter, the trough is near," "Ivan not in a hurry," "Slippery Nicholas," "Andreas the smith few words," etc.

The saddest story of all is of a proprietor who determined to go home from St. Petersburg, where he had spent all his life since childhood, and try to do his duty by his people.

"He sees before him, at the end of his journey, a fine forest, and asks who is the owner, and the

reply is his own name; and farther on he inquires, 'Whose are those fields and little hills?' The reply is again that they are his own. At length he sees the red roofs and gilded cupolas of his home. The peasants crowd round the carriage; square beards of every hue, red, black, cinder-coloured, and white, welcome him with loud hurrahs. 'Our father is come at last.' The women in high red headdresses scream, 'Oh, our little heart, our gold, our dear treasure.' He is much moved at the sight of such excellent natures, and prepares to be their father indeed; he began by diminishing the number of days of forced service, abolished all the dues in linen, apples, mushrooms, nuts, and walnuts, and halves the other work which had been rigorously exacted from the women. He thought that they would become more careful of their houses, their husbands, and their children; instead of which, gossip, quarrels, and free fights between persons of the fair sex got to such a pitch, that the husbands, after months of woe, came up one after another and said, 'O Barine, deliver me from my wife, she is worse than an imp of hell, I can't live with her any longer.' As for the land which he kept in his own hands, the hay dried up, the

barley failed, the oats shed, while on that held by the peasants everything went on well. 'Why are my crops worse than yours?' inquired he. 'God knows, perhaps it is the fly,' or 'Surely there has been no rain at all;' but the fly had not eaten the peasants' crops, and the capricious rain had certainly singularly favoured them. He tried to found a school, but the outcry was so great that he was obliged to give it up, and all his efforts after law and order, arbitrations and regulation of property, failed one after the other, and at length he gave up society, sank into a torpid lethargic state, spent his time in solitary smoking, and soon sank to the level of his neighbours."

Here Tchitchikof made himself generally useful, and got ninety dead souls given him for nothing.

The mixture of luxury and barbarism in every account is remarkable. The ladies are described as dressed in the last Parisian fashion, smoking cigarettes, sitting in filthy rooms with broken furniture, and surrounded by drunken maids. "There were six laundresses in the house, and they were drunk four days in the week." The men with endless carriages and horses, drinking champagne like water over their cards (more champagne is consumed in Russia alone than is

grown in the whole French province), but eating enormously like savages. One man consumes a sucking pig for his dinner, another a whole shoulder of mutton stewed in gruel, another slips into a supper before the guests arrive, and eats up a monstrous sturgeon, "leaving only the tail and the bones." Superstitions, such as "spitting three times on each side when death or any other unpleasant subject is spoken of, to ward off the devils," are mentioned casually. There are four kinds of these—house devils, wood devils, stable devils, field devils—and a counter charm for each. "In a great house, with a magnificent array of servants, the ladies'-maids and footmen sleep on the ground in passages, on a mat or the bare floor, and in large towns often in the street."¹ Tchitchikof on some grand occasion "passes a wet sponge all over him, which generally he did only on Sundays; but if he did not wash, he always used a great deal of eau de Cologne!" The condition of society reminds one of a medlar, rotten before it is ripe.

At the end, Tchitchikof, who has obtained 200,000 roubles from the State Bank, is obliged to

¹ The clerk of a Jew broker in one story is described as being forced to sleep on the threshold in winter in a sheepskin.

refund them, but he has borrowed sufficient money from his different acquaintances to enable him to purchase a large and rich estate in a distant part of the country. He marries the daughter of a neighbouring mayor, a very decent man, and sets up himself for good. The author is so angry with his own creation, that he is barely able to finish the fortunes of his hero. After years of happiness, and having six children, he grows sick of so much repose, health, well-being, and calm. He finds respectability extremely tiresome, and proposes to his old coachman to start once more on their travels, as in his beloved Bohemian days. The man has grown old and fat, and resists to the uttermost ; but Tchitchikof will listen to nothing, and they set out at daybreak in his celebrated britska. About twenty miles from home, however, the wheels break down, and the village blacksmith takes two days to mend them ; he starts again the following evening, but while he was asleep the coachman and the horses drive back again quietly to the house. His wife wisely holds her tongue, and he has not the courage to go forth again once more. "He then reconciled himself to fate, was elected marshal of the nobles, went in for agriculture, subscribed to seven Russian papers,

two French, and one German, although he did not know a word of French, and barely a hundred of German." "This good and great man," as the author perpetually calls him, "adored everything existing in Russia, and considered any reform as iniquitous, anti-social, and unchristian. As a man of order, and marshal, he enjoyed general esteem and consideration. He may truly be said to be one of the most perfect heroes of the past generation. Indeed, we believe that he is not dead, that such men must live for ever, immortal as they are in their qualities." He was a good-natured rogue, and had always intended to treat his serfs well; "but this last point of his wishes was like the plates of dessert for ever left untouched at the grand dinners laid out in railway stations."

The accounts in Ivan Tourgueneff's stories are still more sad. The note struck has a deeper sound of tragedy, and one painful scene after another shows the misery, vice, and barbarism of all classes alike. In one of the lighter sketches, the great musical capacity of the people mentioned by Haxthausen appears. Notwithstanding his extraordinarily backward state of civilisation, the peasant is a born musician, and the Russian bass is said to have two more low notes in his voice

than the rest of Europe. A young peasant, Ivan, excels so greatly in the trills and shakes and variations, of which the race is very fond, that he is called "the nightingale." He hears of a rival in a distant village who trills and shakes to even a higher degree, and sets off for the place, to dare him to a trial of singing in the village dram-shop. The hut is full of bearded amateurs, who listen with all their might. Ivan begins the contest, and the beards wag approval. Next comes the rival's turn, and his performances are still finer, and so prolonged and delightful that he evidently is winning, and the beards wag faster than before. Poor Ivan asks for another trial, and this time he surpasses himself. He sings higher and higher, and deeper and deeper, and above all louder and louder, till at last he falls down in a fainting fit, and is carried out, he knows not whether triumphant or not, but half-dying.

The Emancipation was doubtless a great work. 20,000,000 serfs belonging to private owners, and 30,000,000 more, the serfs of the Crown, were set free. They had always, however, considered the communal land as in one sense their own. "We are yours, but the land is ours," was the phrase. The Act was received with mistrust and suspicion,

and the owners were supposed to have tampered with the good intentions of the Czar. Land had been allotted to each peasant family sufficient, as supposed, for its support, besides paying a fixed yearly sum to Government. Much of it, however, is so bad that it cannot be made to afford a living and pay the tax, in fact a poll tax, not dependent on the size of the strip, but on the number of the souls. The population in Russia has always had a great tendency to migrate, and serfdom in past ages is said to have been instituted to enable the lord of the soil to be responsible for the taxes. "It would have been impossible to collect these from peasants free to roam from Archangel to the Caucasus, from Petersburg to Siberia." It was therefore necessary to enforce the payments from the village community, the Mir, which is a much less merciful landlord than the nobles of former days, and constantly sells up the defaulting peasants.

The rule of the Mir is strangely democratic in so despotic an empire. The Government never interferes with the communes if they pay their taxes, and the ignorant peasants of the rural courts may pass sentences of imprisonment for seven days, inflict twenty strokes with a rod, impose fines, and cause a man who is pronounced "vicious

or pernicious" to be banished to Siberia. The authority of the Mir, of the Starosta, the White-heads, the chief elders, seems never to be resisted, and there are a number of proverbs declaring "What the Mir decides must come to pass," "The neck and shoulders of the Mir are broad," "The tear of the Mir is cold but sharp." Each peasant is bound hand and foot by minute regulations; he must plough, sow, and reap only when his neighbours do, and the interference with his liberty of action is most vexatious and very injurious.

The agriculture enforced is of the most barbarous kind. Jansen, Professor of Political Economy at Moscow, says: "The three-field system—corn, green crops, and fallow—which was abandoned in Europe two centuries ago, has most disastrous consequences here. The lots are changed every year, and no man has any interest in improving property which will cease to be his in so short a time. Hardly any manure is used, and in many places the corn is threshed out by driving horses and waggons over it. The exhaustion of the soil by this most barbarous culture has reached a fearful pitch."

The size of the allotments varies extremely in the different climates and soils, and the country is

so enormous that the provinces were divided into zones to carry out the details of the Emancipation Act—the zone without black soil; the zone with black soil; and, third, the great steppe zone. In the first two the allotments range from $2\frac{3}{4}$ to 20 acres, in the steppes from $8\frac{1}{2}$ to $34\frac{1}{2}$. “Whether, however,” says Jansen, “the peasants cultivate their land as proprietors at 1s. 9d. or hire it at 18s. 6d. the result is the same—the soil is scourged and exhausted, and semi-starvation has become the general feature of peasant life.”

By the Act and its consequences 52,000,000 human beings, or 77 per cent of the population, were converted into owners or perpetual tenants. In the Baltic provinces private owners still possess rather more than the peasants, but in three of the most northern and two of the most southern provinces peasant ownership prevails exclusively. The landed proprietors were nominally indemnified by the State for the land taken from them, but they were often greatly in debt, their mortgages were deducted, and of the remainder only part was paid in cash, the rest in stock which was charged for the cost of administration. When the labour of the serfs was taken away from the owners who still held on, free labour was impossible to obtain,

from peasants working their own land at seed-time and harvest. The nobles were therefore obliged to sell as much land as possible. They were allowed, if the peasants wanted a homestead, to oblige them to buy an allotment with it, and the State undertook to advance four-fifths of the purchase-money. At the beginning of 1881 nearly £100,000,000 had been thus advanced by the Government to the ex-serfs. Only 34 per cent, however, applied for money to be helped to buy; the remaining 66 per cent have done it by compulsion.

The result as given in all the Reports from Russian authorities and English consuls agrees that the Emancipation Act has been an utter failure. They repeat the same facts again and again. "The peasant proprietors of the zone without black soil are in a condition of bankruptcy, hopelessly in arrears with their poll-tax, capitation rents, redemption dues." "The Russian peasants are now in reality with few exceptions mere paupers, as the land they cultivate does not yield enough to feed them. From one end of the country to the other, they are in a state of semi-starvation. In several of the Volga provinces there has been a widespread famine." The *Moscow Gazette* acknowledges that

"nearly one-half of Russia is afflicted with famine to an extent hitherto unknown." Another Report says, "The harvest has been failing in the south of Russia, not from drought, but from the ravages of beetles and worms produced by slovenly cultivation and shallow ploughing. In twenty-five years the experiment has reduced the Russian peasant to a lower level than when he was a serf, and exhausted the once rich soil of the country." The English consul at Taganrog repeats the same story. A quarter of a century has sufficed to ruin the once great and powerful nobles of Russia. One-fourth of their estates, indeed, of the whole agricultural soil of the country, is mortgaged to the land banks, who often step in and take possession. Another fourth has been sold outright.

"In the black earth zone, with a produce of 281 kopecks per *desiatine*, the interest takes 228, the taxes 15, leaving the proprietor only 38 kopecks. It being impossible to get labour at the most important seasons, the landlords sometimes let land to the Mir, receiving every third or fourth shock of corn as rent ; the cost of ploughing, seed, and harvesting being borne by the peasants. The land considered enough in 1861 to support the peasants is now quite insufficient ; village and

communal taxes have increased as well as the Government imposts. The price of corn has gone down, the seasons have been bad, the agriculture is wretched, the produce is only $2\frac{1}{2}$ to $4\frac{1}{2}$ to the quantity of corn sown, whereas in England it is about 15 for winter and 20 for spring cereals. Although rent is only 2s. per acre for large holdings, and 11s. to 15s. for vegetable gardens, the peasants cannot at the present time live and pay their taxes, and their cattle and goods are often seized, which means ruin. No manure is used, corn is sown consecutively for years, after which the land is used for grazing.

“A great part of the country has fallen into the hands of rapacious middle-men and speculators, the upper and middle classes are nearly ruined, and that without benefiting the masses.”

Usury is the great nightmare of rural Russia at present, an evil which seems to dog the peasant proprietor in all countries alike. The “Gombeen Man” is fast getting possession of the little Irish owners. A man who hires land cannot borrow on it; the little owner is tempted always to mortgage it at a pinch. In Russia he borrows to the outside of its value, to pay the taxes and get in his crop. “The bondage labourers, *i.e.* men bound

to work on their creditor's land as interest for money lent, receive no wages and are in fact a sort of slaves. They repay their extortioners by working as badly as they can—a 'level worst,' far inferior to that of the serfs of old, they harvest three and a half or four stacks of corn where the other peasants get five. The Koulaks and Mireaters, and other usurers, often of peasant origin, exhaust the peasant in every way; they then foreclose the mortgages, unite the small pieces of land once more, and reconstitute large estates. A koulak is not to be trifled with; he finds a thousand occasions for revenge; the peasant cannot cheat the Jew as he does the landlord, and is being starved out: the mortality is enormous. In the rural districts of England, the death-rate is 18 per 1000. In the whole of Central Russia it reached 62 per 1000 at the last revision in 1882. 'The famine now so frightfully common is not owing to barrenness of the soil, for the mortality is greatest where the land is best. The birth-rate in these provinces is 45.'"

"The usurers are able to oppress the peasants by the help of the tax-gatherer, *e.g.* they are obliged to sell their corn in September, when it is cheap, in order to pay the tax, and buy it again in

winter, when it is dear, to live. The tax-gatherer knows that if he sells up the peasant he becomes a beggar and can pay no more; flogging therefore is resorted to, and insolvent peasants are flogged in a body. Last winter an inspector of Novgorod reported that in one district 1500 peasants had been condemned to be flogged for non-payment of taxes. 550 had already suffered, and the Ministry was interceded with to procure a respite for the rest.

"One-third of our peasants have become homeless, down-trodden, beggarly batraks." "The area of cultivated land has diminished by one-fifth, and in some places by a quarter of its former amount." "Land yields nothing," is the general outcry: "It is abandoned to the wasteful cultivation of the cottiers," says Stepniak—no prejudiced witness against them. The Nihilist remedy is to give the peasants more land, *i.e.* to enable them to mortgage further, and to divide still more as population increases. The other remedy proposed is to re-constitute large estates, which is being done already, but in the worst manner and by the worst men in the country; "a wage-receiving class would then be possible," it is said. The artificial creation of a system of peasant proprietors in order to increase their well-being, it is allowed now on

all hands, has failed entirely in Russia. Stepniak is as decided on the point as the Conservatives.

The two panaceas prescribed for Ireland have been the possession of land by the peasants, and local self-government, both of which have been enjoyed by the Russian peasant for centuries, although the particular form of it was changed. The proposals for Ireland by the late Government are strangely like those employed in Russia to carry out emancipation—*i.e.* the buying out of the landlords, the enormous advances of money to the peasants to purchase their land, the encouragement to the *morcellement* of property generally, and the extensive rights of self-government to be given to local communities. Moreover "the character of the Russian Slav is like that of the pure Irish Celt, with no steady habit of industry or tenacity of purpose, the chief object of life being to drink and be merry. The consequence of the measure has been that the upper and middle classes have been ruined, agriculture in a good sense has almost ceased to exist, and the peasant is at the last degree of misery and starvation, ground down by the usurers, who alone make it possible to pay the taxes."

The financial condition of Russia is thus

described: "The Government loses £5,000,000 yearly by its administration of the railroads, about £3,500,000 on the decline in value of the paper rouble.¹ She borrows enormous sums each year at high interest. An overwhelming economic crisis in Russia is expected, which will bring financial ruin more disastrous than the most sanguinary and costly war." It is a vicious circle: the Empire cannot reduce its expenditure, the taxes cannot be remitted, and they can only be paid by help of the usurers. The knowledge of this will probably account for the hesitation lately shown at St. Petersburg. The malversations and peculations of the War Department are such, also, that the number of troops on paper is no real guide. It is told on the best authority that it was necessary to call out 700,000 men in the last war with Turkey in order to place 200,000 in the field;

¹ England is now accused by Russia of every possible crime, "the fall in the paper rouble, the union of Roumelia which was hatched at Princess Beatrice's marriage, the refusal of the Mingrelian Prince," etc. She takes the place of the Bonaparte of the past generation in England. See Canning's poem in the *Anti-Jacobin*.

"Who fills the butchers' shops with large blue flies?
Who makes the Luddites and the bread to rise?
Why he, who, forging for this land a yoke,
Reminds me of a line I lately spoke," etc.

the rest had either not obeyed the summons, had fallen sick on the way, been starved, or had deserted.

The motive for emancipation cannot be considered as quite disinterested. It was not the first time that the Russian Government had posed as the protector of "the masses against the classes." Bulgaria is only the last instance of a policy which has long been the mainspring of Russian government. "Profiting by the difference of race between the peasants, and the German landowners and merchants in Lithuania and the Baltic provinces, it has aggravated the discord between them. The attempt to crush the German element has indeed created great ill-feeling in Germany. The same policy has been pursued in Finland, where the Finns have been set against the Swedes," while in Poland the ruin of the nobles, ousted in great part by the peasant proprietors (who are now mostly in the hands of the Jews), is a melancholy story. In Bulgaria the ill-will between the Mahommedan conquerors and landowners, and the Christian peasants, was such that Russia appeared as a deliverer; but as soon as she demands the price of her efforts, in a semi-protectorate, Bulgaria has shown as much dislike

towards her would-be lord as to the old Turk himself.

One result of emancipation has come about, probably foreseen by the benevolent despot. The peasant class comprises five-sixths of the whole population—a stolid, ignorant, utterly unprogressive mass of human beings.

Count Tolstoi in one of his novels describes an absurd crusade of Russian volunteers which took place some few years ago to the assistance of Servia, there having been no declaration of war with Turkey, but simply because the Servians were “orthodox and Slavs.” Men of the upper class were starting from all parts of Russia, and one of them asks a peasant on his own estate what he “thinks about it all. Ought we not to fight for the Christians?”—“Why should *we* think?” answers the old man; “our Czar Alexander will think for us as in everything else. *He* knows what to do.” These men have received in gift nearly half the empire for their own, and cling to the soil as their only chance of existence. They consequently dread all change, fearing that it should endanger their valued possession. A dense solid stratum of unreasoning conservatism thus constitutes the whole basis of Russian society,

backed by the most corrupt set of officials to be found in the whole world. The middle and upper classes are often full of ardent wishes for the advancement of society and projects for the reform of the State. These are generally of the wildest and most terrible description, but their objects are anything but unreasonable. They desire to share in political power and the government of their country, as is the privilege of every other nation in Europe, and they hope to do something for the seething mass of ignorance and misery around them. The Nihilists have an ideal at least of good, and the open air of practical politics would probably get rid of the unhealthy absurdities and wickedness of their creeds. But the Russian peasant cares neither for liberty nor politics, neither for education, nor cleanliness, nor civilisation of any kind. His only interest is to squeeze just enough out of his plot of ground to live upon, and to get drunk¹ as many days in the year as possible. With such a base to the pyramid

¹ "When God created the world He made different nations, and gave them all sorts of good things—land, corn, fruit. Then He asked them if they were satisfied, and they all said 'Yes,' except the Russian, who had got as much as the rest, but simpered, 'Please, Lord, give us some vodka.'"—*Russian Popular Tale*.

as is constituted by the peasant proprietors of Russia, aided by the enormous army, recruited almost to any extent from among their ranks, whose chief religion is a superstitious reverence for the "great father,"¹ the Czar is safe in refusing all concessions, all improvements ; and the hopeless nature of Russian reform hitherto, mainly hangs upon the conviction of the Government that nothing external can possibly act upon this inert mass. "Great is stupidity, and shall prevail." But surely not for ever !

¹ "The same word *Batushka* is used for Father, the head of the *Mir*, the serf-owner, and the Czar," says Haxthausen ; the sun and moon appear under the same word in the songs.

V

ARTHUR YOUNG

PEASANT PROPERTIES IN FRANCE
1787-1887

ARTHUR YOUNG is now so much quoted at second-hand by many who have never opened his book, that it is pleasant to turn to the large, thick quarto in which that shrewd and accurate observer embodied his observations, in a manner which will always make the work a standard authority for the agricultural condition of France before the Revolution, and to compare its report with the present state of its rural population. Young was a Suffolk country gentleman, who farmed his own land and studied agriculture, finance, and the incidence of taxation at home, a good "Liberal," as he would now be called, who corresponded with "General" Washington, and answered for his being "an excellent farmer," when made a member of the

French Chamber of Agriculture. He had received several French gentlemen at his country house, spoke French easily, and had remarkable opportunities of obtaining everywhere the best information on all the points he desired to study.

He started in May 1787, intending to ride through France. Nine hours at anchor after crossing, however, so upset his mare, that he had to rest at Calais; he then proceeded at the rate of from twenty to thirty miles a day, according as he could get a good resting-place for the night, opening his eyes and ears as he rode along to their greatest extent.

The first thing that strikes him particularly, as would still be the case, is what he terms "the labours of the sex." Women were ploughing with a pair of horses; "while in England they will do little in the fields except glean and make hay—the first is a party of pilfering, and the second of pleasure—here they plough and fill the dung-cart." Half-way to Paris his mare fell ill. "French stables, which are covered dung-hills, and the carelessness of the inn garçons," had given her cold, so that he was obliged to go on in a post-chaise, leaving her to follow.

During this and his many other visits to Paris, he was struck with the absence of traffic on the

roads near so great a capital. "No carriages, few carts, it is a perfect desert as compared with the neighbourhood of London." When the mare arrived, he started again on horseback, to cross the whole kingdom to the Pyrenees, riding with two French gentlemen, one of them the Count de Larochevoucauld, through the Pays de Beauce, which he describes as "one universal flat, unenclosed, uninteresting, the soil excellent, but fallows everywhere,"—onward to Orleans, where, from the top of the cathedral, he "looked out on rich meadows, vineyards, gardens, forests, through which the magnificent Loire bends his stately way"; by Limoges, Toulouse, to Bagnères de Luchon, where he stayed some time, investigating the agriculture of the Pyrenees. He was living with the Duke of Larochevoucauld (one of those whom he had received at his house in Suffolk), and a number of other agreeable people; but complains rather bitterly of the dinners at noon, which shortens the time for business in a way that would not be borne in England. "We dress for dinner in England, because the rest of the day is given to relaxation, but what is a man good for after his silk breeches and stockings are on, his hat under his arm, and his head *bien poudrée*? A

dinner at noon is hostile to every view of science, to every spirited exertion, and to every useful pursuit in life. From Luchon he went to Bordeaux in one direction, and to Nismes in the other, observing and noticing all the way. The fallows perpetually vex his soul, together with the small produce and excessive sub-division of the land. He returned to Paris, still on horseback, in October, where he lived with some of the best society of the time, social, political, and scientific, visited the theatres, listened to the music, saw the public buildings, being specially interested in the excellent Halle aux Blés; took a letter from Dr. Priestly to the great chemist Lavoisier, who showed him his electrical and other experiments; and was introduced to "an ingenious mechanic," a M. Lomond, who showed him "an electric machine, connected with a wire and a similar electrical meter at a distance, where his wife writes down the words indicated by the motions of a pith ball—the length of the wire makes no difference." It is strange to find the electric telegraph thus forestalled, and that nothing was made of the great invention until our own day; the old sad story of the uselessness of being too far beyond your age to be able to benefit it.

"Niagara," the great cataclism, was so close at hand that it is curious to find how everything was going on in much the same fashion as usual in France (except in some of the great towns), and that agriculture, therefore, was in its normal condition.

It is exactly a hundred years since Arthur Young set down the results of his investigations ; since that time a Republic has succeeded to the monarchy, which he saw still in power. Seas of blood, the sacrifice of hundreds of thousands of lives, the destruction of all the institutions of the country, civil and religious, of all usages and customs, of class distinctions, religious worship and education, took place ; an Empire succeeded, which restored everything as much as possible to the old state. Fearful and costly wars of conquest ensued, ending in an invasion of France by Europe, which set up the old dynasty again by force. Another revolution brought in the Orleans family, Revolution the third, and a Republic gave birth to another Empire ; and this to another Republic, which, changing its Prime Minister about every twelve months, now rules over the country.¹ All these floods of change have passed over France,

¹ M. Laveleye remarks in a preface, dated 1887, that, since Sedan, under the Republic there have been 18 Ministers of War and 14 of Foreign Affairs in fifteen years ; now 22 and 23.

and the result to Jacques Bonhomme is, that he is found at the present moment as nearly as possible in the same condition as he was before their passage, certainly in no respect better.

Young's account of rural France might have been written yesterday ; the wretched state of agriculture and the small yield of crops, only half as much as in England—the same calculation as is now made by Sir James Caird—the entangling of the tiny plots scattered over half a commune, which the jealousy of the peasants prevents their ever exchanging or selling to each other ; the severe labour of the women, ground down by toil, and the consequent ill-health of the children ; the small expenditure of the rural class, whose ideal is to buy nothing, but produce almost everything on their own land ; the utter stagnation of thought and want of interest in the outer world, which strikes a traveller on a bicycle¹ at the present day as strongly as Young on his horse ; the high price of land, in spite of the small return from it, "owing to the rage of possessing a piece, in which all peasant savings are invested" ; the impossibility

¹ "We could hardly ever find a newspaper in any country district or small town, except the *Petit Journal*." August 1887.

of employing machines, or improving such tiny patches by drainage or irrigation, as the neighbours quarrel too much to combine; the extraordinary thrift, with neither comfort, health, nor pleasure resulting from their savings ("We live to save in France, not save to live," says the *Revue des Deux Mondes*); the unremitting toil, with scarcely any result, owing to "the wastefulness of ignorance," as Mr. Chadwick calls it: these may all be paralleled exactly at the present day, and are lamented over by the best French economists, Lecouteux, Lafargue, Leplay, etc.

To take the first question—the extreme badness of the farming—wheat and barley was and is followed by a fallow, compared with the English four-course system, which, even at that day, included "tares and beans, turnips and clover, besides the manure returned to the ground by the cattle and sheep, while the land of the Frenchman is stationary." The enormous amount of fallow complained of by Young continues unchanged. The latest scientific observer, Mr. Jenkins, Secretary of the Royal Agricultural Society, says: "At the present moment there are 19,000,000 of acres in France lying idle under fallow every year by this system." The produce of France is only half that

of England, from the impossibility of properly cultivating the tiny scraps of land, in spite of the advantages of the French climate.

With regard to vineyards, which were then, as now, considered the best property for small owners, because they require no horse-labour, nor cultivation except by hand, he says —

“The French have a great advantage in their vines; these are worth from £8 to £9 an acre, which may be obtained even from bad land, from stony and blown sandy soils. What would not our Suffolk farmers give for one hundred dozen of wine per acre on such soil?” But, on the other hand, the crop is so exceedingly uncertain that for one, or even two years perhaps, nothing may be had from it. “In England a failure in the crops, which passes almost without notice, in France is attended with dreadful calamities.” “The vine-culture demands about £2 : 12s. an acre in hand-labour alone, whether there is a crop or no crop.” [There are fifteen processes, we were told by an old vine-grower, which must be carried out.] “An average of seven years is of no account to a man of capital, but to the poor proprietor, living from hand to mouth, it is fatal.” The vine-countries are called the poorest and the people most wretched

here, but this is because of the way in which the vineyards are cut up ; the universal practice of dividing among the children multiplies these little plots to such a degree that "the misery flowing from it can hardly be imagined by those who are whirled through France in a post-chaise."

"No vines," he says, "are planted ;" "on the contrary they grub them up." [The same process is going on now. The consul at Nantes, in a blue-book of last year, writes that the vineyards in that province are being broken up as not paying.] "The little and poor proprietors are all in misery ; a hazardous and uncertain culture is ridiculous for a man with a weak capital. How could a Kentish labourer be a hop-planter ?"

"The vineyards in France are often on sharp gravels, sand, and ground inapplicable to the plough, yet their average value may be called £9 an acre, which would show an enormous advantage for France, as wheat, our most valuable crop, vibrates in England between £6 and £7 an acre (the difference of their present value is striking). But the hazards of the culture are such that, to render vines profitable, a man, it is said, ought to have one-third of his property in rents, one-third in farm, and only one-third in vines. The little

proprietors are all in misery, though it is work that only requires hand labour, neither ploughs, carts, nor horses."

At the present moment the phylloxera, an almost imperceptible insect, and the oidium, a sort of mildew devastating the vineyards, make the case still worse for the small man. A great English wine-grower, in the Medoc, lately described the necessary processes for extirpating the disease, which he was forced to undertake, as so expensive that the small owners in his neighbourhood, who could not afford the money, were ruined.

Young accounts for the high price of land in France, which is much beyond its real value (as at the present time), by saying that it is the only investment of the lower orders, whereas in England, if a man has saved £200 or £300 he hires and stocks a small farm or invests it in some more remunerative manner.

He studied everywhere the much-vexed question of enclosures. In France as in England, and all other countries during the tribal stages of the world, when the land was held in common, "it was the least stable and the least regarded of possessions, property consisting in cattle and serfs."¹

¹ Seebohm's account of village community.

As long as flocks and herds can wander over the common property, husbandry and improvement by individuals is impossible. It is not until land has been enclosed and parcelled out that any real agriculture can exist. Arthur Young quotes Frederick the Great as "justly showing that it was only after the enclosure of the commons that agriculture began to prosper in England." Mirabeau, pointing out the vast advantages of enclosures, quotes a Report of 1777, showing how thirty-two parishes examined near Soisson possessed nearly 4000 acres of common. These contained 2470 families, which in that year were reduced to 1689. In twenty villages without commons there were ninety "fires" (*i.e.* households) more than in twenty other villages hard by, which have commons. As a general principle, there is a cow in every thirteen acres where commons exist, and one to every nine and a half where there are none.

"Fallows fall as regularly, however, in the open as in the close fields, and cattle and sheep are as nothing in comparison to what they ought to be."

"The open arable fields of Picardy, etc., are cursed with all the mischiefs known in England," *i.e.* the rights of pasturage after the corn is reaped,

and throughout the fallow year. "Also that miserable, phantastical division of property (*i.e.* 'the minute patches mixed up and scattered') which seems contrived to give as much trouble and expense as possible in their culture. It must not be forgotten," he adds, "that commonage gives to those who have no property the right of injuring the property of others."

France was much less enclosed than England in 1787. "Here," he says, "we have made great progress in allotting and enclosing open fields during the last forty or fifty years, and notwithstanding tithes, folly, obstinacy, prejudice (!), and heavy law expenses, the change goes on, and from the increase of good sense we may hope to have the whole kingdom enclosed in another century. But in France they have not even taken the first step; rights of common pasture are universal in some provinces, where everything is eaten up that has not been sown according to custom." The Duke of Argyll's late work on Scotland is full of illustrations of the mischief of common land there both to the landlord and tenant, and the impossibility of improving it.

Produce of all kinds in France Young describes as inferior to that of England, as is the case at

present. The sheep were poor and bad, the price from 11 to 15 livres (money value of that time). They were kept in stables at night, to be secure from wolves, and allowed 1 lb. of hay each in bad weather; "according to our notions they are universally starved. They are clipped twice a year, the wool is coarse, and little of it, about 5 lbs. for each sheep. The English fleeces are double at least in weight. The stables are only washed out once a year, the flocks lie on a dung-hill in close, suffocating heat, and their health suffers."

The total number of sheep, says De Foville, has diminished lately from 30,000,000 to 23,750,000 in France, and the wretched little flocks, often under a score in number, attended by a *bergère*, to be seen in most parts of France, makes the fact not surprising to the traveller.

As to the *métayer* system of holding the land—now much cried up, and which still continues—under which, he says, "perhaps seven-eighths of the hired land in France is held, the arrangements vary; sometimes a third, but generally half, the produce is for the landlord, who finds the stock, buildings, seed, and sometimes implements; the tenant gives labour and pays the taxes. At the

first blush the landlord would appear to suffer most, but on nearer examination the tenants are found in the lowest state of poverty. In some places the *métayers* borrow their bread (of rye and barley mixed) almost every year of the landlord, before the harvest comes round. No peasant eats wheaten bread."

At the present moment the great flat loaves of rye to be found in the cottages, sour, heavy, mouldy, and the diseases brought on by living upon such food, are the despair of the French doctors.

Elsewhere he says, "There is not a word to be said in favour of the *métayer* system. The poverty of the farmers is such that the landlord must stock the farm and run the hazard of trusting his property absolutely in the hands of people ignorant, careless, and sometimes wicked." In one case a man he knew was obliged to sell his estate, the flocks having been lost by the folly of the *métayers* in shutting them up without air.

He goes on to say, "Our labouring poor are incomparably more at their ease, and in every respect happier than those in France," and declares that "there is no comparison between the comfort of a day-labourer and of a very small owner.

We have no people that work so hard and fare so ill."

"The universal desire of possessing landed property in France occasions infinite misery. That property should be the parent of poverty is an apparent contradiction, but there is not a clearer or better ascertained fact in the range of modern politics. The only property fit for a poor family is a cottage, a garden, and perhaps grass-land enough to yield milk. This will not impede daily labour, but arable fields must in the nature of things be ill cultivated, and the national interest suffers."

The amount of inconvenience endured by travellers, even a hundred years ago, appears on Young's return from Paris, when he "was kept waiting at Calais three days for a wind and a paquet," the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester being in the same inn and situation.

The following year (1788) he took another journey of investigation in France. "The value of time among the small proprietors is nothing, as may be seen in all the markets of France, where swarms of people regularly lose one day in the week." At Arras, on market day, he met "nearly a hundred asses coming out of the town, each

laden with a trifling burden, and crowds of men and women, all idle in the midst of harvest; the town would have been fed in England by one-fortieth of the number." "Whenever I see this swarm of triflers buzz in the markets, I take for granted a minute and vicious division of the soil. It is absurd to see a strong, hearty man walking miles and losing a day's work, worth fifteen or twenty sols, to sell a dozen of eggs or a chicken."

"A man who can get no other employment, and has a scrap of land, will work at twopence, yes, even a half a farthing a day, and if he has an ardour for industry, even for nothing. He will take up a stone here, and lay it there, he will pick straws, he will carry earth in a basket to the top of a mountain, he will walk ten miles to sell an egg."

Those who know the ways of the country-folk in France at the present moment will bear the same witness of the crowds of women coming from the villages to any central town, with a cauliflower and a bunch of radishes, or some pumpkins and half a dozen peaches on their heads. The conscription has diminished the proportion of men employed since Arthur Young's time, and it is the women on whom falls the greater part of the

field-work, and who walk miles to do what a few higglers' carts could perform much better (minus the gossip), wearing out clothes, shoes if they have them, and leaving their rags to chance, their wretched dwellings uncleaned, their babies to neglect. Mr. Chadwick reports the death-rate in rural France to be far greater than in England; the population in thirty-four departments is diminishing, and no one can wonder to hear that the infant mortality is 50 per cent, who have watched women labouring in the fields, sometimes with two or three children about them scarcely able to walk, but dragged miles from home, and out all day in the inclemency of the weather.

He next visited Brittany, where he describes the cottages as "miserable heaps of dirt, no glass, and hardly any light. The husbandry not much farther advanced than among the Hurons, and great stretches of ground covered with furze, heath, and fern." His mare had begun to go blind, to his great distress, but she carried him over roads of rock and steeps that could hardly be worse, to within two miles of the city of Nantes, where he found "a fine town with a magnificent theatre and imposing streets." The contrast between the town life and the squalor of the country is still most

remarkable in France. Since that time railroads have opened up the country, and early strawberries and vegetables are grown for the Paris markets in the mild climate of the West, yet two articles in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* last year give an account of the province differing very little from Young's. The small yield of the crops, the poverty of the peasants, the lowness of the wages, the mud hovels, with the *cohabitation du cochon*, are all described as might have been done a hundred years ago. The saving habits of the people were as great in 1787 as now, and the result in comfort and civilisation of any kind as small. "They save on their food, their clothing, their houses, and their amusements," was the verdict only the other day.

With regard to the produce on the small owner-ships, he says: "I never saw a single instance of good husbandry on a small farm, except on soils of the greatest fertility, such as the deep, rich soil of Flanders, the exuberant plain of Alsace, the fertile borders of the Garonne."

The hoards put by, generally with a view to buying a piece of land, *des petits sous dans des grands bas*, hidden in the thatch or the garden, go on still. A notary, not long ago, received pay-

ment from a peasant for a small bit of land, consisting of gold pieces of the coinage of every Government, from that of Louis XVI. Some of the money must have been lying idle for ninety years.

The French were ingrained Protectionists, even at that time ; everywhere he found a cry for war with England, "caused by the commercial treaty, which was execrated as a fatal stroke to French manufactures ; 24,000,000 of consumers were to be involved in the miseries of war, for the sake of half a million of producers."

Young returned by Rouen to Dieppe with his faithful and sure-footed blind friend, who had carried him in safety about 1500 miles, and which he did not choose to sell in France, where he could have had a large price for her, though she was neither handsome nor of a good breed.¹ "This shall be her last labour ; some ploughing, however, on my farm she will perform for me, I daresay, cheerfully."

His third journey was, in 1789, to the east of France. Paris, which he reached in July, was in a ferment with the meeting of the States-General.

¹ He is very uncomplimentary to French horses, as to their stock of all kinds.

He describes, with great enthusiasm, "the grand sight—the representatives of 25,000,000 of people, after the evils of two hundred years of arbitrary power, rising to the blessings of a freer constitution; it is one which calls forth every latent spark, every emotion of a liberal bosom." He heard speeches from the Abbé Sièyes and Mirabeau (who spoke without notes), "an undoubted orator." Later, however, he says: "The Tiers État have declared themselves the National Assembly, to the exclusion of the other orders and of the King himself. They have assumed all the authority in the kingdom, and converted themselves into the long Parliament of Charles I., not to be dissolved without their own consent;" and complains of the want of knowledge of "the first principles of government, the talk of ideal and visionary rights of nature." One proposal was that the army should be in the hands of the provinces.

In the large hall at Versailles, holding 2000 people, the utter want of order shocked him. "Once to-day there were a hundred members on their legs at the same moment, and the spectators were allowed to applaud. They will not take any example by the English Constitution, which they

say 'is not free enough.' " "The Commons have decreed the illegality of all taxes, but have granted them for the Session. They will then deliberate as to the misery of the people."

"The reports of the intentions of the Court, who, they say, are bent on utterly extirpating the French nation, except the party of the Queen, are perfectly incredible for their gross absurdity, but nothing was so glaringly ridiculous but that the mob swallowed it." He was astonished, however, at the supineness and even stupidity of the Court, and at the want of energy or political knowledge among the upper classes.

He dined several times with the Master of the Wardrobe to Louis XVI., the Duc de Liancourt, a very enlightened man, in his apartments at Versailles, meeting Volney the traveller, and some of the Deputies, twenty or thirty of whom he entertained twice a week. "There is a great change since I was here last year; many of the guests were dressed *en polisson*, without powder in their hair, and some in boots—not above four or five were neatly dressed." He was much struck by the diminution of the influence of the sex, as he called it. "A short time ago the women in France governed everything, and the men in this

kingdom were puppets." He did not, however, linger long, but bought a sort of gig at Paris, with one horse, with which he set forth to complete his survey of the eastern part of the kingdom. He found the country in the greatest disorder; the peasants had risen everywhere. At Dijon, he says, "The state of this province is terrible; three out of five châteaux have been plundered, and the possessors happy to escape with their lives. These violences have been committed by the peasants only, not by brigands, as was first said." "There is not a paper to be had in the provinces," he writes from Besançon; "they do not know whether their deputies are in the Bastille, instead of the Bastille having been razed, and the mob plunder, burn, and destroy in complete ignorance; yet every day, in the States-General, they puff themselves off as the first nation in Europe, the greatest in the universe."

The utter stagnation of thought all over the country, as compared to Paris and two or three great towns, is the same now as then, as described in all French accounts of the *vie de province*. "Coming from Paris," he says, "where I passed some time amidst the fire, energy, and animation of a great revolution, where I enjoyed the resources

of liberal and instructive conversation, with the amusements of the first theatres in the world, the change to inns (and those French inns), the ignorance of everybody concerning events then passing, which so intimately concerned them, the detestable circumstance of having no newspapers, although the press is freer than in England," he finds beyond measure dreary. This fact about the press is not much known.

At Dijon, he says: "In this inn there is a seigneur, who, with his wife and family—one an infant a few months old—escaped from their flaming château, half naked, in the night. All their property is lost except the land. The family was valued and esteemed by their neighbours, with many virtues, and no oppressions to provoke the enmity of the people." "The regeneration by fire and sword, plunder and bloodshed, is fearful."

At Besançon there was not a newspaper to be had in the whole town, though he went on inquiring from coffee-house to coffee-house. "Here, again," he says, "there is not the least restraint on the press, but the universal circulation of intelligence in England, which transmits the least vibration of feeling or alarm from one end of the kingdom to the other, has no existence in France.

Many châteaux near here have been burnt, others plundered, the seigneurs hunted down like wild beasts, their wives and daughters ravished, their papers and titles burnt, and all their property destroyed. These abominations are not inflicted on marked persons, odious for their former conduct, but in an indiscriminating, blind rage, for the love of plunder. Galley-slaves, and villains of all kinds, have instigated the peasants to commit all sorts of outrages." Again and again he was taken up as a spy, the same silly suspicions prevailing as during the Franco-German war. In general he was suspected as an emissary of the Queen! "How industriously," he says, "must the attacks upon this poor woman have been spread." One day he stepped the size of a piece of land planted with mulberries, and was seized, as clearly sent by the Queen, "who was intending to double the taxes on land." The same story was repeated near Clermont. Once he had mounted the cockade of the Tiers État, but it had been blown away, and the peasants surrounded him, crying out that he must be a seigneur, and therefore ought to be hung. He escaped with difficulty. The whole country was in the greatest agitation.

At Strasbourg he found the mob breaking the

windows of the Hotel de Ville ; finding that the soldiers would not interfere, they beat the doors down with iron crows, and entered like a torrent, with a universal shout, when a shower of tables, chairs, sofas, books, papers, pictures, rained from all the windows of the building, 70 or 80 feet long, succeeded by bannisters, tiles, etc. He clambered on to the roof of a row of low stalls opposite, and for two hours beheld the scene. "Once I saw a fine lad of about fourteen crushed to death by something, as he was handing plunder to a woman, I suppose his mother, from the horror in her countenance. All the archives were destroyed, which will be the ruin of many families."

He then passes on to Alsace, and it is strange at the present moment to read the account he gives of the strong German feeling he found there. "After crossing a hill range covered with oak timber, we entered a level plain, where the land is very productive ; it is inhabited by a people totally distinct from the French, with manners, language, ideas, prejudices, and habits all different ; not one person in a hundred has a word of French ; the rooms are warmed by stoves," etc. He is indignant at "the conquest or seizure of the country

by Louis XIV. The injustice and ambition of such conduct strikes me more forcibly on the spot than it had ever done by reading, so much more powerful are things than words—Alsace is Germany.” The popular cry now reverses this, and says Alsace is France, so entirely has the German tradition been eliminated. Query, Would the present French feeling die as quickly?

Young has been lately found fault with for saying that he believed peasant properties comprised a third of France. The exact number before the Revolution is impossible now to ascertain, but how great it must have been in every district which he examined and visited so conscientiously, is shown by his report on “the universal practice of dividing land between the children, and the wretched agriculture incident on it.” “These little farms are thus multiplied to such a degree that a family depends for support on a plot that cannot possibly yield it. The children are riveted to a place from which they ought to emigrate, and have a flattering interest in a piece of land which tempts them to remain when other and better interests call them elsewhere.” The change in this respect since the Revolution is small indeed.

In another place he says: "The small properties of the peasants are found everywhere, in every part of the kingdom, to a degree we have no idea of in England; the minute division of the small farms amongst all the children makes them in general poor and miserable. In Lorraine and Champagne, they are quite wretched. I have more than once seen divisions to such an excess that a single fruit tree standing in about 10 perches of land has constituted the farm." [Champagne has not much improved since that time; we once saw there a woman driving a plough drawn by a donkey and a little cow.] "The husbandry of these little properties is as bad as can well be conceived; the industry is conspicuous, the labour severe and incessant, yet a failure in the crops produces frightful suffering."

There are two districts mentioned by Young as exceptions to the prevailing poverty and bad husbandry, and these continue at this moment to be among the most prosperous in France. One of them, Normandy, "where the pastures," he says, "are excellent, though the arable was as ill-treated as elsewhere." The farms at the present time are still not so much sub-divided as elsewhere, the cattle are larger and better, it commands the markets

both of Paris and England, and there is much prosperity among the farmers. *Trente bêtes à cornes* are sometimes found on a farm, we are told with pride.

The other is Bearn, in the Pyrenees, where he describes properties as "from 40 to 80 acres in size, and therefore not incapable of good husbandry. The enclosures are excellent and well kept; the neatness, ease, and happiness charmed me." In a Report of the same country for the Le Play Society, by M. Etcheverri, the peasants are described as still possessing tolerably large farms; sub-division is avoided by a systematic emigration of the superfluous hands and mouths to South America; many of them returning to their old homes with money in their pockets. There is none of the dislike of leaving the *clocher* which is so great in France generally; that, as is told in *Round My House*, "a girl is supposed to have lost her character if she takes a place even in another department."

The peasant proprietor is essentially an unprogressive being; the limits of his tiny plots now, as of old, constitute his whole world. The magnificent array of the triumphs of mechanical science, the increase in social civilisation, which Mr. Gladstone chronicles with such pomp, in his paper

dated 1st January, the railroads, steamboats, electric telegraphs, the improvement in lighting, warming, in communications of all kinds, in manufactures, the cheapening of food and clothing, have done so much for England during the past hundred years, that Mr. Giffen puts the rise of the working-classes here at about 50 per cent. They work fewer hours for higher wages, while the necessities of life have been cheapened to them at about 30 per cent.

France has had the same advantages as England in all these respects, yet they seem to pass over the head of the French peasant without doing him any good. He has not benefited by cheap corn from America, because he insists upon eating his own, produced at a high rate off his own plot. He is rooted to the village where he was born, and does not use the railroads, while Protection prevents his receiving any of the cheaper products from abroad; his idea being to make and grow everything at home, and, says Lafargue, he wears hardly any manufactured articles, which Arthur Young declares to be the worst thing for a country. He reads nothing, and writes hardly at all, so the cheapening of postage and the abolition of taxes on knowledge do not benefit him. The use of

machines for diminishing the cost of production is entirely outside his ideal of life. He has got rid of the Gabelle (the salt tax), the Taille, and the Corvée, but the taxes under the Republic are now greater than of old, and there is that worse tax of all on life and labour, the conscription, of such terror to the rural population. The stagnation of thought and knowledge of all kinds, in a population of peasant proprietors, is evident in all countries alike. "To consume all that they produce is, at this moment, pretty nearly the condition of France," says Mr. Jenkins; "it has almost ceased to be an exporting country"; and adds that "the consumption of manufactures by the peasants is, as in Young's time, almost nothing."

It seems to have been supposed that the prosperity of the *petites propriétés* could be proved by a glowing account of the well-being of the French farmer-owners of from 70 to 80 acres, lately published in the *Fortnightly*. De Foville, the great patron and historian of the system, places the limit of the "small properties" at 15 acres, above which they are classed as *propriétés moyennes* in his lists, and the word "peasant proprietors" has a well-established meaning as a translation of

petites propriétés. Therefore, "holdings on an average of 70 to 80 acres," where the "owners drive about in well-appointed waggonettes," and are, "as an average, capitalists of from £800 to £1000," is a description of a class entirely beside the question. Arthur Young, indeed, says: "Such men can and do succeed, because the size of their farms renders decent agriculture possible."

The *Fortnightly* writer goes on to mention that "within the last fifty years vast numbers of day labourers" (the phrase is sufficiently vague) "have transformed themselves into owners of from 50 to 70 acres." Wages in France are sufficiently low, according to the Reports of some of the English consuls, in Blue-Books 1885-86-87,—two and three francs, with food, but this only for a small part of the year. Celibacy is extremely rare, and a labourer must, indeed, be a phoenix who can purchase from 50 to 70 acres out of half-a-crown a day, and feed his wife and children. Moreover, De Foville repeatedly observes that France may be divided into three equal parts, that of these the large properties are, though slowly, splitting up, and the small increasing in number, while the *moyennes propriétés* remain

stationary. What then has become of the vast numbers supposed to be added to this category?

The "pulverisation" of the land, which even De Foville allows to be taking place in certain parts of France (there are 12,600,000 plots under 15 acres in the country), is not, he considers, dangerous, because many belong to the same owner. This, however, only indicates, according to Lafargue, "the excessive dispersion and entangling together of the tiny morsels" (sometimes down to a quarter of an acre in size), often over the whole of a commune, and perhaps a couple of miles or more apart, rendering all proper cultivation impossible.

In places near large towns, where the land is most valuable, a placard is described, announcing with pride "a piece of ground to be sold, with four trees," vaunting itself over the lot alongside, which cannot possess the trees, because the code forbids them to be planted at less than six feet from your neighbour, and the whole width of the "estate" is not above twelve feet. The Chinese ideal of a perfect state of the land question quoted by Alfred de Musset must here be well in sight, where on each side "on

entend le voisin se moucher." "A world where solitude could not exist," says John Stuart Mill, "is indeed a poor ideal."¹

The high value of land, considered as a symptom of prosperity by so many writers, is, according to the English economists, from the time of Arthur Young, only a proof that the French peasant has till now had no other mode of investing his savings, which are buried in land, out of which it is impossible to get a decent interest for the money spent on it.

I was chatting one day with a group of dirty old women sitting in the middle of the street (there was no wheel traffic to interrupt us) at their doors in a small town of the Limagne, one of the richest portions of France. The beautiful old stone houses of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, with carvings, mouldings, and coats of arms, had belonged to the old nobles of the district, and the present owners were huddled and encamped—it could not be called inhabiting—amongst the relics of past grandeur, pell-mell, without any furniture, simply using them as

¹ "Alors on ne verra, mon cher, dans les campagnes, Ni forêts, ni clochers, ni vallons, ni montagnes."

Only—"Des champs plantés de bons légumes," as Alfred de Musset's Dupont says hopefully.

shelter. One room was entirely filled up by an enormous cask. My friends were all landed proprietors, living on their revenues, but, in these cases, were obliged to stay at home, being too old for labour. Their stories were much the same. One of them told me she had two sons: "*nous leur avons donné à chacun le pain et le vin,*" i.e. a bit of corn land and a vineyard, which was apparently the regulation *dôt* and family. She and her husband, being unable to work themselves, were evidently at the mercy of their sons' cold charity, a peasant King Lear and his wife, and she intimated that a *sou* would be agreeable. There was no rent paid for either house or land, the last most productive, except so far as the interest on mortgages nearly universal on all these small properties is a real rent, yet the result was squalid misery. There was no idea of the possibility of seeking for other work elsewhere, or of emigrating. To live on the land was the only future possible in their eyes, as in Ireland at the present moment.

Land, however, is becoming less popular in these bad times as an investment, and has gone down in value 40 per cent in French Lorraine, and from 20 to 33 per cent in other corn-growing

districts; while the rush to the great towns from the country is as great or greater than in England, because the land is found not to be able to support the dwellers upon it.

How, indeed, can the peasant proprietor be considered as prosperous, when out of eight million French proprietors of all sizes three million are on the pauper roll, and, therefore, exempt from personal taxation. The law of entail is strict in France, and the State cannot distrain for taxes so as to impair the rights of the next heir. Professor Völcher, a well-known authority, declares that "the English labourer is far better off in food, clothing, and comforts than the peasant proprietors of France, Germany," etc.

The system is looked upon with favour in France, not because the peasants are prosperous or enlightened, but because they are a backbone of stupid stability in the country, valuable as a make-weight against the stormy changes of the great towns. In the *triste crise*, the *terrible épreuve*, which De Foville declares agriculture in France is undergoing, discontent as well as misery is increasing among them, as is shown by the Consular Reports, 1887, and it has yet to be seen how they will behave under the strain. It seems

a strange time to choose for inaugurating the system in Ireland, with much poor soil, a bad climate, and none of the habits of thrift and industry which have enabled the French peasant hitherto to exist at all even in so low a state of civilisation and comfort.

NOTE.—The English Consuls from different parts of France for 1887 repeat the same story: "Things are going from bad to worse in the country. France imports 8,000,000 quarters yearly to feed its population, and in spite of the protective duties, wheat cannot now be grown at a profit. Live stock are lower in price than last year, and the rent question is coming to the front for those not owners." "The whole French wheat crop only averages sixteen bushels to the acre; the little owner, with his primitive spade-work and tiny patches, has little chance in the great cereal competition of the world." "Corn, in spite of protection, cannot be grown at a profit," says one after another. "Live stock has fallen since 1885, and is sold cheaper at every fair. Market-gardening and fruit-growing have been tried since the grapes failed, and in consequence the price of fruit and vegetables has gone down to half in some districts." "If they were farmers of large farms instead of owners of small ones, they might, by better tillage and the use of labour-saving appliances, increase their returns; but peasant proprietors cannot do this; their farming is slovenly and wasteful of labour, and the returns half what they might be."

The American tendency is all towards large

farms, and a United States Report says that those districts where the farms are too small to admit of the purchase of machines cannot now afford to export wheat, and the trade is passing away to those States where larger farms are to be found. In California tracts of wheat of from 3000 to 5000 acres belonging to the same owner are spoken of, with the Yankee love of tall talk, "that one furrow takes a day before the horses can be turned."

These are the farms of the future, says one school. "A thousand individuals could live on a square mile easily, with no overwork, and be fed and clothed off the land," cries the Socialist Krapotkin at the other end of the scale of thought. A happy ideal.

VI

THE SCATTERING AND ENTANGLING OF SMALL PARCELS OF LAND IN FRANCE

ONE of the chief dangers and difficulties concerning peasant properties has only been noticed in England during the last two or three years, viz. the manner in which the minute parcels of land, even when belonging to one owner (inherited, or bought, at different periods), do not lie together, but are scattered up and down, often at considerable distances from each other. De Lavergne mentions six millions of parcels in the departments of the Marne and two others, with about ten acres each, often divided into twenty fragments separate from one another. He calls it one of the greatest vices of the system of small properties, entailing enormous loss of time, the injurious right of passing through a neighbour's land, etc. The *Enquête Agricole* mentions cases where, in a single

commune, some 2000 acres were divided into 5248 separate parcels belonging to 170 proprietors. The essays of the Cobden Club do not even allude to this point, though the difficulty has long been considered so great in France that Fourier is quoted as not far from the truth when he said "the value of land would be doubled, in some places even quadrupled, by combining the scraps." The remedy of his Phalanxteries, would have been worse than the disease, but when it is considered how impossible it is properly to cultivate morsels of three or four roods or poles, none of them touching the other, the constant friction, the quarrels with the natural enemy, "le voisin," concerning the turning of the plough, lines of demarcation, the injuries done in crossing from one patch to the other, the impossibility of proper measures for draining, irrigating, manuring on any general principle, etc., M. Lafargue's words become intelligible as to "the labyrinth, the disastrous condition" in which he declares French agriculture to be at present. The employment of agricultural machines is, he says, impossible; "the scattering of the plots, entangled to infinitude, one with another, give rise to interminable and ruinous law suits, to inextinguishable hatreds,

and offer insurmountable obstacles to any economical cultivation of the soil." "The cost of the Government taxes on the registration, on sales of small properties, which are continually changing hands, the heavy interest upon mortgages," are among the causes of the disastrous crisis which he proceeds to describe.

Facts such as these, however, on paper only, do not trouble a man sitting in his study. It is only after seeing with one's own eyes the difficulties thus entailed that they can be at all realised. We were driving one day a few miles from Clermont, a large town of 40,000 inhabitants, along a rich hillside, with groups of chestnuts, walnuts, tall apple and pear-trees hung with red and yellow fruit (no trees but such as bore fruit were allowed to exist there), corn and potatoes were growing underneath, and peach-trees in the open spaces of vineyards, for which last immense prices were given, the sales being run up to £180 or £200 an (English) acre; the plots sold, however, were generally so small that the price was calculated at so much a toise, *i.e.* 6 feet 6 inches square, for which 20 francs was often paid. An old man was digging potatoes on a piece the size of a pocket-handkerchief. We asked him if he had any vines

"Yes, but an hour off from here."—"And where do you live?"—"At a village more than two miles away" (where he asked us to come and see him). He had to carry tools and produce on his own back, or that of his womankind, to and from each of his morsels, while the vineyard required daily care of the closest kind during great part of the year. Next came a bit of pasture land, the ownerships being so small that each stack of hay was about ten feet through. The weather was bad, and they had been pulled down and remade two or three times. It was the second crop, and was going to be housed as soon as the cows had eaten the first. The villages, of 300 and 400 people lay far apart, the squalor and dirt of which were beyond description; the beds on the ground, the chickens going in and out and around them, and not a single article of furniture, closet, or even box, the clothes hanging on a rope. The old women purred like cats over the pleasure of spending the evening in the stables with the cows. "C'est une chaleur si douce," they said; "and it saves fuel." The little cows do any farm work, and drag the small carts to market, bringing back manure, but they often give only three or four pints of milk a day, and this only for six months.

A good cow in England supplies 500 quarts during the year. A cow is considered good in France which gives 300 quarts, even in Normandy, where the best breed exists. The excessive poverty in such extremely rich surroundings seemed inexplicable. The land, the crops, the houses, all belong to the people; no rent of any kind was paid except as interest to the money-lender. "The enormous waste of time" mentioned by De Lavergne, in going from one plot to another, and the incredible badness of the byroads on which the produce is carried, may account for something. We once went on a voyage of discovery up one of them between Clermont, a great town, and Royat, a large watering-place. It scrambled up and down an almost precipitous hill, first to the right, then to the left, without the smallest plan, simply to reach some isolated scraps of land, and ended nowhere.

In order to show by the eye the extreme inconvenience of cultivating these minute portions, a map is here given of the estate of a French proprietor, a personal friend, which offers a vivid picture of this almost incredible subdivision. It shows some 2500 acres of arable land, situated on a high and rather bare plateau, of which the

largest part, about 2000 acres, was taken possession of by the peasant tenants and cut up at the time of the great revolution. A rich tract of pasture and some portions of forest also belong to the estate, subdivided in the same way, but not shown on the map. The 500 or 600 acres in the hands of the Seigneur are subdivided into 191 morsels, some of them of half an acre and less, besides the chateau, with its gardens and orchards. Of these 145 are fragments of the original property, which have been kept by the family, 46 are bits bought back from the peasants—the 191 are coloured brown.

The intervening portions left in white, forming four-fifths of the whole, belong to sixty different peasant owners in patches varying from five acres upwards, with a few of from seventy to eighty acres, but these are again subdivided into little parcels scattered over the whole area. Thus an owner of ten or twelve acres has twelve or fifteen separate pieces, wide apart, in such small morsels that proper cultivation is practically impossible. The agriculture of the peasants has been most primitive, with no knowledge of the proper rotation of the crops: they sow wheat the first year, oats the second, and leave a bare fallow the third, "to let the land rest." The proprietor,

who follows a more enlightened system, though under such difficulties, with excellent results, is giving the peasants the most practical lessons by exhibiting in his home farm specimens of his own heavy ears of corn and long straw after each harvest, side by side with their pinched and meagre specimens, but without much effect.

This may be called a typical estate, and the manner in which the subdivisions have come to pass is as follows. At the time of the great revolution, a decree of 1790 abolished the feudal and manorial rights of the Seigneurs without indemnity, and the peasants were allowed to become absolute proprietors of the land, held at rents in money or in kind at twenty years' purchase, which they could compel the Seigneur to receive.

But the peasants were in little hurry to buy (as is the case with tenants at the present moment in Ireland). They hoped to get the land for nothing, and were wise in their generation. Two years later, difficulties were made about proving any titles to land, and in 1793 the National Convention suppressed all rights of the Seigneurs without any indemnity, so that the peasants who had been shrewd enough to wait found themselves absolute owners of their holdings, without paying

anything either to the landlords or to the estate. "This advance of revolutionary principles," remarks a French lawyer, "starting with a moderate departure from the ordinary rights of property, and ending in measures of wholesale spoliation, is the most impressive instance in history of a movement set on foot by moderate reformers, which, gathering strength in its course, swept away all the old landmarks with resistless force, and entailed consequences which they had never foreseen and could not control."

In Ireland the excessive subdivision, though only on tenant farms instead of ownerships, has been carried out from old times, and it might have been supposed that the uniting of the small pieces into farms large enough to be well cultivated is what was required ; but this is resisted almost to the point of insurrection, and the Irishman allows his sons to squat around him on a piece of land utterly insufficient for the decent bringing up of a family. A daughter's portion is often a row or two of potatoes. Cabins, where the pig partakes of the family food, on the table or out of a porringer ; women and girls, barelegged, with only one petticoat, the pig sleeping under the bed and the donkey in the corner ; an habitual standard of food, close

to starvation point, are common. There is no variety of occupation, for the fisheries on the west coast are next to nothing. An effort was made a little time ago by landlords, little equal to the expense, to improve them. A good fishing vessel was procured, and nets were provided from Scotland. At the end of three years these, which the Scotch fishermen dry and mend and make to last for eleven years, having been utterly neglected by the Irish, were worn out, when they were crying for more. These are the practices which have sunk a great part of Ireland to so low an ebb of civilisation.

In part of Donegal cabins may be seen close to each other by the roadside (each provided with a barking cur). A bit of potato ground behind joins on to a mountain pasture, where each cottage has a cow right. The squabbles, however, were such that, as stone was abundant, each share has been walled off into very long narrow strips, reaching far over the hills, and looking like a striped bit of calico. Not only was the loss enormous of ground covered by the stone walls, but it is well known that land will support one-third more stock as a whole than when thus subdivided. A piece of common ground near Newcastle, called the "Town

Moor," feeds above sixty cows, but cut up into portions could not support above two-thirds. But the land hunger is such in an Irishman that he seems to prefer that his cow should starve on a strip of his own rather than fatten in common with those of other people. One man who had bought six acres of land said that he had borrowed nearly the whole from the Gombeen man (the usurer). His live stock consisted of a donkey and a pig. What could be extracted from the land, which was over-run with weeds, did not much more than pay the interest, and more than equalled a rent; but he seemed to consider that the honour and glory of possessing it was worth of itself a living.

In Canada, where the Irish seem to do better than in the United States, and do not hang about the great towns, the man might have got a holding of 200 acres for less money, and it is found that the Socialistic ideas upon land which he brings out with him do not stand the climate or the fact of the possessor being himself.

In the islands of the Hebrides the same question is being fought out at the present moment. The land, of course, is limited, and having been tilled for very long in a wet climate its value has been reduced, says the new Report. Each crofter grazes as many

sheep as he can on the common pasture, the strong take advantage of the weak, widows and old men without families suffer greatly; one man will put in thirty or forty sheep, while another with the same rights can only get in six or seven; there are often more sheep than the ground will support, and the consequent death-rate among them is very high.

The difficulty of improving the condition of the crofters is almost insurmountable. Nearly sixty years ago the old Duchess Countess of Sutherland incurred the greatest obloquy for transplanting the people of some wretched villages on the upper moors, far away from doctors, schools, and kirks, where the soil was so poor that there was no possibility of living on it as the families increased. They were taken to the shore, where they were given three acres of good land and a house, which enabled them to profit by the burning of kelp, while she paid the passages of any who chose to emigrate.

It is in the island of Lewis, however, that the problem is being worked out most effectually, and "en champ clos." The Report of the Commissioners says, "The soil is of the poorest quality, the potatoes and oats are soon consumed, the herring fishing, which formerly brought in enough to feed the people, has now gone down in value by over

production, the competition of Norway, and the Russian duty on herrings. The population is utterly listless, apathetic, and indolent. Crofts which are too small to maintain one family are made the home of three and even four. Grown-up children, instead of going out, remain at home on their parents' hands." A typical family is described by the Commissioners "as a man with five sons from twenty-three to twelve years old; no one went fishing, the sons do nothing, they had no money, no credit, no tea, three beds, and three blankets. The women do almost all the work, carrying on their backs big loads of peat and potatoes; the men saunter about with their hands in their pockets doing next to nothing. The hovels are surrounded by puddles of wet manure, while the cows, sheep, and pigs live with the family." Even 100 years ago, in 1790, the produce of the land was considered not enough to maintain the inhabitants, who then only numbered 8311; meantime the population has gone on breeding. It has increased in forty years from 17,637 to 25,487 in 1881. They have been kept alive by different windfalls. The burning of kelp for some time gave employment and wages to both men and women, but when its use was superseded by barilla the industry entirely collapsed, between

the years 1840-44 causing almost a famine. Then came the failure of potatoes in 1846, which brought about another disaster. Since then the herring fishery has been greatly developed, and an annual migration took place to the coast of Caithness of a large part of the adult population—the men to fish, the women to salt and cure the herring. Within the last two years, however, this has begun to decline, and hundreds return from the east coast penniless, while the produce of their own crofts is quite insufficient to feed them.

The remedy which has been so often suggested, of charitable assistance supplying work artificially, has been tried to the uttermost. Sir James Matheson and his widow after him have carried out road-making, enclosures, etc., spending above £100,000 in wages to help the people. These works, however, cannot be carried on for ever, and the people are again reduced to a chronic state of almost starvation. The advance of civilisation, comfort, or independence during the prosperous times seems to have been *nil*. The cabins are as filthy and miserable as ever, rude huts without a chimney, swarming with vermin, filled with peat smoke, where the cattle and pigs live with the family, and Lady Matheson's attempts to improve the

brutalised ways of living almost brought about a revolution. "Nearly everybody seems either to be or to have been married, and the families are usually large and idle." The question of rent from such holdings of course becomes a difficult, almost an impossible one, but the Commissioners observe that "if the whole area of the Lewis was transferred to the crofters, in a few years the same story would be repeated." The Duke of Argyll mentions farms of his own, where eighty-six acres were cut into fragments only large enough to grow a single "stook" of corn.

It is at this moment, when the small holdings, especially in bad climates, have thus failed, and in Ireland the Land League is declaring that they cannot produce enough to nourish the people living upon them, much less pay rent, that the remedy is sought, not in the improvement of agriculture, which can only be done by capital, knowledge, and a sufficiently large area to carry out good farming, but in an extension of the very state of things which has been proved to fail so utterly, and the dividing the large estates into portions such as the farmers living on them can buy.

It is well known that in England it is the small owners of plots and houses who let at the highest

prices, who hardly ever do any sort of repairs, yet exact rack rents to enable themselves to live. Cottage property in England is so unremunerative, that on a large estate with one or two hundred cottages, the rents do not much more than pay for repairs. The plan for constructing cottages in Ireland by State money seems to have utterly failed. Is it supposed that these new Irish farmers will build comfortable cottages on their estates of three or four hundred acres or less, or that they will not evict any tenant who does not pay? An instructive instance of this was seen the other day. A farmer bought a strip of land with five mud cabins on it which had a lease. "What shall you do with these poor people when the lease is up?" said a compassionate lady. "Take 'em by the throat, throw 'em all out upon the road, and pull down the cabins," was the answer.

How the tenant can be benefited by having to pay twice over, that is a tenant right, besides his rent to the landlord, it is impossible to conceive. Where it has not existed before, it is true that the first man receives a payment for the right of choosing his successor, which, till then, belonged to his landlord, but after that time every farmer is out of pocket to the amount of the tenant

right until he parts with the farm to his successor.

In the majority of cases the tenant right can now be sold in Ireland for more than the fee simple of the land. Its value is increasing, while the rents are becoming less.

The difficulties of obtaining rent, and the power of the money-lenders, are curiously the same in all poor and backward countries, with no other means of getting money than from the usurer.

In Bosnia an English philanthropist lately bought a peasant property of about six or seven acres. It had belonged to an old Turkish Aga (landowner), and had been left to his two sons; one part an orchard of plums, apples, and pears, straggling all over the "estate," with a liberty of access in all directions, through the ploughed and grass land, which was thus rendered comparatively worthless to the other son. It was let to a kmet (Bosnian peasant) on the "*métayer*" system; in those parts one-third of the produce to the landlord and two-thirds to the tenant. The kmet and his eldest son are irremovable (as is the case now with tenants in Ireland); the consequence is, that they do not trouble themselves to get much more out of the land than will just support themselves

and their families. The agriculture is wretched and the crops miserable; the landlord's share has always been difficult enough to obtain, but the old Turk used to ensconce himself behind a wall, fire at his tenant, and pepper him well if there was any little difficulty between them. [Might not the monotony of Irish land troubles be varied by the landlord sometimes firing at the tenant instead of it being always the other way?] Now, however, the Austrian Government has forbidden the use of firearms both to Turks and Christians, and the agas, after three years' arrears of rent, in despair sold their property to an English lady, who, having no gun, can as yet get no rent either. Moreover, the flights of crows, which are now unshot, devour the fruit and eat away the mortar between the tiles (the lime, it appears, is good for the laying of their eggs), and a new roof was thus rendered necessary for the house on the property, which, like all the peasants' dwellings, consists of two rooms, in which live the old kmet, his young wife, and several children, and three sons by a former marriage, with their wives and children. How they can find room even to lie pell-mell on the floor is incomprehensible. Clothes, however, do not complicate the business; the children go nearly naked, the men

wear sheepskin jackets and long stockings of different colours, but all men and women are crowned with the red Turkish fez and blue tassel. The bare-legged women are strong, and work like beasts of burden; they dig, plough, harrow, chop wood, and fight as well as their husbands. In a squabble about some cherry-trees growing on a disputed corner of the "estate," men, women, and children fought it out against the "enemy" with sticks, shouts, and howls, and a great amount of broken heads, black eyes, and bloody noses.

The Turks, who were till lately the cruel oppressors of the country, are now getting the worst of it. When the peasants will not pay their rents the Osmanli are forced to borrow from the Jews, who continually foreclose the mortgages, and oust them from both houses and lands. The difficulties of over-population, however, are not to be found in Turkey. Our present civilisation keeps alive at both ends of life the sickly babies and old people, besides those who of old in Europe would have been decimated, as the Turks are still, by pestilence, famine, and war.

Mr. Huxley has lately shown, in a very alarming article, the "tendency to multiply without

limit, which man shares with all living things." When the produce of a country is sufficient for its population there is no struggle for existence; but "add only ten fresh mouths, and somebody must go on short rations." The great migrations in the world's history have been brought about by this problem of finding food for the starving overplus, the swarming of the old Greek colonies, the pouring forth of the Mongolian hordes, the great inroads of the Gauls on Rome, etc.

Here in Ireland and in the Hebrides we are brought face to face with Mr. Huxley's problem in its crudest form. Plots of land barely able to maintain one family are expected to feed the whole of the next two generations. In Ireland the fisheries are neglected, the people take to no occupation but that of exhausting the land, and almost refuse to emigrate to countries where they might prosper. In another generation or two the famine problem, entailed before by a failure in potatoes, may recur, unless something is done to check the subdivision of the land, which entails, at least in Ireland, such increase of population. And then woe to the Government, whether Home Rule or other, that must face the storm of indignation that will then arise among a helpless

people in the habit of ascribing all the evils which their own laziness and ignorance have brought about to the action of Government.¹

The experiment of a great subdivision of property has now been tried in every possible form, from north to south, from Norway to Italy. In France, with every advantage of climate, with unequalled thrift, with untiring industry, and a stationary population, arising from the canon in the Frenchman's moral code not to have more than two or three children in a family, the result, as given recently by a writer esteemed the greatest master of realism, is as follows: "The furious passion for possessing land" is the scourge of a peasant's life; he stints himself of food; "his wife is a drudge, with the stupidity of a beast of burden;" everything is sacrificed to the desire of hoarding money, health and decency are left to shift for themselves; "they are hard to their fellows, and dishonesty is almost as common as avarice;" the life is monotonous beyond credence, "they are too stingy to spend money in amusements," and there is nobody to provide them gratis; "they care nothing for

¹ The Emperor Frederick has lately condemned the folly of those who fancy that "all human ills can be cured by taxing one class for the benefit of another."

politics, for they have found that universal suffrage puts no meat into the pot."

The whole picture is darker than any which has been yet painted of the position of the French peasant owner.

On the other hand, the subdivision of hired land in the Hebrides and Ireland has been carried to nearly as great an extent, but without the advantages of foreign thrift or industry; the people breeding like rabbits, and the climate bad,—the result has been the same in France, the miserable dwellings shared with their domestic animals, the overwork of the women, the want of amusement, a standard of living below which it was barely possible to exist at all. It is at this moment that England is offering a premium for the multiplication of small holdings, which the habits and constitution of the Scotch and Irish Celts, with their tribal instinct for settling with their families around them, make it certain will be once more subdivided to the uttermost.

The labourer has been left out in the cold; none of the Land Bills, none of the Irish sympathisers and subscribers, have taken the smallest notice of him, and he has been extremely hurt and annoyed. If he had not hoped that "some-

thing good " would turn up out of the muddle he would have made his violent complaints heard before now, we are told. As it is, his position is rather higher in the demands of greedy clamour than that of the farmers. At one election for a county the Home Rule candidate told the farmers that if they voted for him they would have their land at prairie value. He told the labourers that they must vote for him or they would be cursed from the altar, and would lose their souls. There was not a word about independence of Ireland and the glories of Home Rule, nothing but an appeal to greed and to fear ; but as the salvation of your soul is higher than that of your pocket, the labourer was evidently considered the nobler in feeling.

The extraordinary doctrine which surprises M. de Grancy, "chez Paddy," so much, that having had the use of a thing, the consumer is to refuse to pay more than he himself thinks convenient, is spreading to other commodities than land.

"There is a growing feeling in Ireland that debts need not be paid." A charming letter was read in the House of Commons, on 22d February, from one Kelly, who refused to pay £1:9:5 to a little shop. He did not deny that he had the goods or that he possessed the money. "Are you such

a d—d fool as to believe that I should give you the money when I want it a d—d deal more than you do?" He went on, "The Plan of Campaign is going in for more than 50 per cent on all kinds of debts." (This shows what is to be expected for the poor little shops when Home Rule comes in.) He proceeds, "It shall come before the House. Ned Harrington would do it in a couple of minutes, and he'll be in one of our Governments in College Green before very long!" "It may be law, but it is not justice," declares Mr. Kelly, to cast upon him the burden of payment; that is, he wishes to eat the food and refuse to pay the price of it. He winds up with true magnificent Irish hyperbole, "The civilised world shall be informed of your conduct if you apply to me again for the money!"

The Irish agricultural holders are now to a great extent hopelessly insolvent (as was shown in the Debate, 22d February). "They have been borrowing money from banks and money-lenders at from 10 to 43 per cent of late." Are the new occupying owners likely to be much more wise?

Mr. Chamberlain, no prejudiced witness in favour of the landlords, declared in the House that "the real difficulty in Ireland is not that

rents have been excessive and unfair, it is the complete insolvency and embarrassment of a large portion of the tenants."

He goes on to say (as does the Home League) that "if the whole rent were taken away from the landlord, the difficulty would remain, and in a great number of cases the tenants could not get along." How should they, indeed? Over a great part of Ireland the land is poor, the climate is bad, the agriculture wretched, and prices have gone down, particularly of stock, which they used to sell and send away to be fatted; but a lower depth remained. In 1870 Mr. Gladstone's Bill gave the tenants a security which they immediately began to mortgage. The shopkeepers and money-lenders have been willing since that time to lend them money—and await with confidence the "whittling away" of the landlord's interest, which makes their own better. "This," says Mr. Chamberlain, "is the history of the indebtedness which has grown up since 1870; and involved so many poor tenants in inextricable embarrassment." He spoke a little further on of their "hopeless insolvency."

This is the condition of the class who are now called upon to purchase their holdings and begin the era of a new millennium. The land must be

owned by somebody, and is it supposed that the landlords of these new estates of a few hundred acres will perform the duties and bear the burdens that have been found so heavy in past years better than the larger landlords have been able to do? The dual ownership, created with such pomp in 1870, has broken down already, and the only object of the new reform is to get rid of it as soon as possible. It is said that public opinion in Ireland is beginning to doubt whether, when the occupiers cannot or will not pay their rents, the State is wise in trusting them with money requiring interest to be paid to itself.

Peasant properties are valued in France for their conservative element (although of the narrowest and lowest type) as against the socialism of the great towns, not on account of the economic value of the system. Whether an institution can be permanently maintained, however good the political effects may be considered, when the economic results are so disastrous, must be a question, even in France, where it is of old date; but to establish it anew in Ireland will indeed be a work of extraordinary difficulty, and the most doubtful prospect of success. It must be remembered that the French peasant's conservatism is

from the possession of land bought by his hardly-gathered sous, long in amassing, while the new Irish small owner, having neither earned nor saved, will receive his land bought with money lent by an alien Government, and may be tempted to hope that he could get rid of both State and debt together. The only chance of such prosperity as Ireland with her difficulties of race and climate can expect, is the enforcement of law and order, with a certainty that crime shall not go unpunished, of which we now see the beginning, as we trust—a regular system, whose effects can be calculated and relied on, hardly by bribing the Irish farmers with State money to undertake a charge which, with far better conditions of soil and climate, has given such disastrous results, after such long experience and in so many different countries.¹

¹ See M. de Grancy's speech at Jesse Collings's dinner (June 7) as to the difficulties of the system he knows so well.

VII

I HAVE been asked to add this little story on the condition of the small owners or statesmen of the North at their best. I have given the manners and customs of these yeomen farmers from the recollections of the last generation, and from having known the "survivals" ourselves. The life was only possible by practising a thrift and self-denial equal to that of the French, living entirely upon home-grown food and clad in home-spun garments. They asked nothing from the outer world, and neither knew nor cared about men nor things beyond their own hills and dales. They required no money and possessed none; there were times of intense suffering, almost to starvation, when the crops failed and the cattle and sheep died from any cause. Their only resource then was to mortgage their little properties, entailing the payment of what was often a heavy rent for their sterile moorlands. Such

an existence could only be carried out for a class in the old days of great isolation, great power of endurance, and no desire for the variety and novelty which beset the present generation. The hand of the world's clock never goes back on itself, and a state of things natural in that earlier phase of English life, when the hand-loom and the petty forge were also successful, can never by any effort of Reformer or Parliament be made to live again artificially in this England of the Nineteenth Century. No English labourer would consent to live so hardly.

A YEOMAN'S HOME IN THE DALES SIXTY YEARS SINCE

It was my first cure, and I, a young curate of three-and-twenty, was put in charge of two solitary chapelries, on the high moors, one of them twelve miles to the north and the other four to the south of the central village where I lived. In fine weather nothing could be more delicious than the brisk, bright air as I rode across the tracks among the heather, for roads there were none, putting up blackcock and grouse as I passed, and the little mountain sheep which could scam-

ble anywhere, and live on anything, even the scanty grass among the big boulders. The moors were seamed with dales, wherever a stream found its way, and here the ground was better and little green closes and even patches of oats were to be seen. A small corn mill stood at one place on the tumbling rushing cataract at the head of the glen, among the promontories of rock, and a little low stone farmhouse here and there, perched in the most solitary places. There was an honest, true, warm-hearted ring about the real moorsmen, who were extremely pleasant to live with, and they soon became very friendly to the "young priest," as was the usual phrase in those days. I was Yorkshire born and Yorkshire bred, which helped us to an understanding.

The farthest of the little chapelries lay higher up near the head of one of the dales, and with a splendid view down a broader glen, where the brook widened into a river, falling among rocks. The chapel was a long, low, old stone building, with a tiny bell-tower and a porch. I heard of an inscription on a similar one, showing it was built by Earl Tosti, brother of Harold, but there was nothing to mark the date of ours. It had belonged to a great religious house down in the Lowlands;

now in ruins, and had probably been served by a resident monk, living in some sort of stone cell near by, or by a curate like myself, riding up for the day's service.

I started always soon after six, for the journey was a difficult one. In winter I have known the melting snow-water swell one of the streams so that it reached half-way to my knee as I stemmed the torrent on horseback, and my gray mare and I had much ado to get through it safely at all. Another time the way to reach the upper ground had been cut through an enormous snow-drift, the walls of which were higher than my head on horseback. One Sunday, blinded by the sleet and thick falling snow, I missed the way, and was wandering off on the wide moor, no one knows where, when the congregation, not seeing me arrive, set the bell tolling, and turned out with shouts and loud cries, which brought me safely in.

The little church was almost always full with the farmers, statesmen, and their hinds (labourers). We had a trifle of Sunday school to begin with, the only direct instruction the children could ever receive, and then came the service. Every woman, as she stepped over the threshold, made a low curtsey, every man a reverent bow. If their

seats lay near the "priest," the salutation was repeated to him on passing the pulpit.

Sometimes I was wet through and had to borrow the clerk's coat to appear in, while mine was being dried at his fire. After church was over I dined in the solitary dwelling near the chapel, where lived the widow of the late clerk. She used to put my piece of mutton and potatoes into a flat iron-covered vessel, which was then heaped all round with great turves of hot peat, a foot or two deep, before we went to church, in order to bake slowly during the service. The result was excellent, for all the juices of the meat were preserved as in the savage prehistoric earth-cookery.

One day I was summoned to the funeral of an old woman, and being a little late, I found the company sitting on the wall of the churchyard, comfortably chatting, with the coffin put down cheerfully in the midst of its friends. Nobody was ever ill, nobody died except from old age, so that I had no attendance on the sick added to my labours. "Does nobody ever die here?" said I, when I first came to the place. "Nobboddy as I ever heerd on, without it be an old ooman, whiles," was the laughing answer.

Sometimes a farmer would send to beg that I

would come and christen a new-born babe, as it was often impossible to take it across the moors to church. After the performance there was a little feast, where I was bound to eat of the "parket," a sort of great gingerbread cake, and partake of the gin provided for the occasion, but there was no drinking in the district. The dalesmen were sober fellows, except perhaps on great market days, when they went down to the nearest market town to meet their kind and have a bout of jollification. The women visited the land of shops, if at all, about once a year to get such luxuries as tea and materials for cakes, with an occasional ribbon and silk handkerchief; but almost all their clothing was home-made, and the spinning of wool and flax went on during the whole year, while an itinerant weaver collected the yarn, and wove it in his hand-loom, as described in *Silas Marner*.

Their food consisted of oatcake and oat or barley bannocks, bacon, fitches of which hung pendent from the rafters of the old kitchen, cranberries, cloudberry jam, milk (but cows were not common), and vegetables,—no butchers' meat, yet stronger men I have never known. Great teas were the festivities, where you

were pressed to eat as much as would have furnished two strong men. The little low, old stone farmhouses were hid away among the purple heathery hills, almost mountains, which swept all round, and where I used to find beautiful little crannies and nooks, with great orchises and mountain flowers, gentians of three kinds. Bilberries, cranberries, and cloudbberries grew among the heather, and rare plants in the peat bogs of the hollows, which were brilliant with shades of brown and red, bright green and yellow. Peat was generally cut for fuel in the outlying farms and cottages where the hinds lived ; coal was rare, for no cart or wheeled thing could get up or down the tremendous pitches of the hillsides, and the only means for the carrying of goods was by means of strings of pack mules and donkeys. The utter seclusion was greater than we can now conceive, and there was scarcely any communication even between the different farms, but the air was delicious, life-giving, to those who could stand these high regions, and nothing could be more healthy than the result upon both the men and the women.

It never occurred to me to be alarmed on my solitary rides, late and early ; the people were as

honest as the day, and perfectly trustworthy. Moreover, I was, as it were, "dwelling among mine own people." I do not know, however, how my nerves would have stood it if I had heard what happened in a parish not far off a little later. I tell the tale as it was told to me.

There had been a period of great distress among the statesmen, the oats had failed, the hay had been drowned out by the weather and the floods, the cattle had had scarcely anything to eat, and there was something like starvation in the dales. The curate had collected a subscription in the lower country, and was taking the money about himself to the different farms, but the distances were so great that he was sometimes kept till quite late at night. One evening on his outward journey he suddenly became aware that there was a figure moving beside him, and in the gloaming he recognised his brother, who had died some time before. He was so awe-struck that he did not speak; the figure said nothing; and, after keeping by his side for some time over the lonely moor, disappeared. He noted down the time and the vision, but nothing occurred to throw any light upon it. Some years after he had taken the duty at a gaol in another

part of the county, and one of the prisoners, being under sentence, desired to make a confession to him. He told of a number of crimes, and ended with, "I was very near once taking your life, sir. It was in that bad year, and I heerd as how you went carrying money about in those lonesome dales. I hid behind the big boulder on the brown moor. I seen you coming up, and waited till you should be near enough, *but that night you were not alone.*"

I do not, however, believe in ghosts. As Abraham is made to declare in the words of one so much greater, "Between us and them" (the spirits) "there is a great gulf fixed : they cannot come to us, nor we go to them."

There were plenty of superstitions about bog-gats and bogies and hairy goblins, who beat the corn and ate the cream, but these were not terrible.

One evening I was sitting enjoying a rest, after a hard day's work, with a Gerard's *Herbal*, 1618, on my knee, a small folio with "cuts," which a friend had picked up at a cheap bookstall for me, and I was looking out a rare gentian. It had just struck nine. We kept early hours in the dales, and I was just going

to bed, when Mrs. Dixon, my landlady, opened the door with "Here's one as be wanting of you, sir," and a shock-headed little girl, about twelve years old, neatly dressed, but with bare feet, crept in under her arm.

"My missis, she says as how you are to come off sudden with me, for life and death, says she, what waits for no man."

"'Tis from the Lathkill Dale," put in my landlady, "and that is five mile off, if it is an inch."—"What, are the old Cloudesdales ill?" I asked the little messenger, who only shook her head.

"Won't morning do? I'm sure it's quite too late to-night," put in Mrs. Dixon. "Missis says ye maun come, foul nor fair, sick nor well."—"But what is it for?" I pleaded. "She said as how I was to doddle none, nor chatter none, or she would cut my tongue out" (we were very outspoken in the dales); "and I maun come and go like the wind."

There was no help for it, and I went out to saddle my tired mare, begging that the child might have a basin of bread and milk, which she finished in great haste as soon as she saw I was ready, and we started.

Lathkill Dale was the most distant and

secluded of the outlying statesmen farms in the parish, and the way there the most difficult. It was a bright moonlight night in autumn, almost as light as day. As we came out of the silent village on the wild moor, I would have taken the child up before me, but she was far too independent-minded, and I preferred her own little active bare feet, as she showed me the devious way among the green sheep paths, twisting and turning, never straightforward, through the deep heather. I can see the little figure before me now, turning in the bright moonlight. Road of course there was none, not even a track ; up one steep hill and down another, through a peat moss, where my little guide led me, forgetting that while she could hop from patch to patch of solid grass roots, I and the mare must flounder through at the risk of sticking fast in the bog.

"There's lots of cranberries here," said Elsie, watching us composedly as we scrambled out at last, the horse mired up to the chest. "Bonnie lady gave me this," added she, pulling a ribbon out of her pocket, "for doing for her, but I donna dare show it to missis ; she'd down upon me like the day o' judgment."

I knew the place and the Cloudesdales well,

but there was certainly no "bonnie lady" there then. The old statesman had sent for me some six months before, believing himself to be on his death-bed, but life was slow to part in this stout, hard race. He was a tall, wiry old man, with great grizzled eyebrows, that moved ominously when he was angry. He was lying in a cold, comfortless, dark, stone-flagged room, next to the kitchen, in a heavy oak bedstead, without sheets, which were considered generally in the dales as too great a luxury. Mrs. Cloudesdale was now trying to put them on, for the great occasion of death, very much to his annoyance. After a little talk I found that he had a deadly feud with his nearest neighbour, a farmer, living some miles over the hill, about a right of sheep walk, worth not sixpence-halfpenny. The quarrel had descended to them from their fathers, and neither of them would yield an inch for his life. I talked in vain of "forgive as ye should hope to be forgiven"—I brought down the terrors of the next world in a way that I should perhaps hardly do at present, but without the least effect—when at last the old woman rose suddenly, shouting aloud, "Mun I see ye go to be brunt eternally before my very eyes, ye dour man?" and he surlily gave consent to have

his enemy summoned to his side. A messenger was sent over the moor to fetch him. I would have prayed and read with the old man, but he closed his eyes and seemed inclined to sleep.

It was bitterly cold, and I went into the kitchen and sat within the enormous chimney-corner. Mrs. Cloudesdale was lifting a long coil of her own homespun linen from a great carved old chest, and tearing it into stripes. "It's for the auld man's shroud, ye ken. He'll be wanting of it soon," said she gravely, when I asked what she was about.

When the hereditary foe, a rather younger man of the same build, arrived, we went straight to the old man's bedside. Cloudesdale looked at him fiercely. "Jock, the' say ah's goin' to dee. Wag hands!" He reached out his own, and the ceremony of reconciliation was solemnly accomplished. I was rejoicing over the success of my efforts, when the penitent, falling back upon his pillow, ejaculated sternly, while his eyebrows nearly met, "But if iver ah get oup agen, mind yersen!"

He did not "get oup" again, and in a few days I was summoned to lay him in the grave, the bearers having carried him over seven or eight miles of the rough mountain moorland in the bitter spring weather. I had heard nothing of the Cloudesdales

since that time, except that the widow had taken a nephew to live with her to mind the farm.

Elsie and I had now reached our last descent to the farm, which lay for shelter under the lee of the hill, near a tumbling, dashing brook, boiling, rushing, foaming, between low piles of rock and over great masses of stone covered with moss, which had fallen from above and barred its way. Opposite the house, however, it had spread into a shallow ford, which shone now brightly in the moonlight. "You must get up here at least, child, and let me carry you through," said I; but before I had finished speaking, she had kilted her short petticoat, and I could see the little white feet splashing through the water to the other side.

The farmhouse and steadings, the pig-styes and cow byre, all of cold gray stone, stood on a brow, with a little patch of oats in the hollow, a strip of bright-green meadow by the beck, and a kailyard, but nothing like a garden in that bare wilderness of heath—not a tree was to be seen. There was a sort of desolate grandeur, however, in the stern outlines, the sweeps of hill, almost mountains, the tumbling and rushing beck; nothing could exceed the savage seclusion of such a place in those days—the utter loneliness—lost, as it were, in the desert

of great heathery seas of moorland stretching to the border.

Mrs. Cloudesdale was standing at the door awaiting me in her striped woollen jacket and linen cap. "What is it? Elsie won't tell me a single word," said I.

She was climbing the steep stair before me and did not turn. "It's one as is come to us from the lowland pearts for to have her child up here private; the babe's come, and I misdoubt as she's going fast. She is just wild for you to christen him afore she dies," said she, as she opened the door of the room at the stair-head. It was perfectly bare, nothing but the bed, the table, a great carved old chest, with an apology for a basin upon it, and a couple of chairs. The moonlight was pouring into the room and on the bed, where lay a young woman with her long black hair streaming over the pillow. She was perfectly still, her eyes were closed, and her beautiful features looked like marble in the cold light. "'Tis the young priest," said Mrs. Cloudesdale.

She opened her great dark eyes as I came up, and looked at me intently. "You have been a long time coming, sir," observed she at last, gravely.

"I made as much haste as I could," I replied, gently. "Death may make more haste for me," answered she, in a tone so low that it could scarcely be heard. She put her hand on the little bundle that lay beside her. "There is no time to lose ; you must baptize this before I am gone," she went on, in the same stern, unmoved tone. I knelt down by her side and prayed ; her black eyes gleamed and her mouth moved, though it did not seem to me that it was in following my words, but only in her impatience to get on.

"Take him," she said, when I had finished, imperiously to Mrs. Cloudesdale, standing at the foot of the bed, who took the child in her arms. "You shall be godmother," said the patient. "God-parents are not needful here," said I. "But I choose her, and you, sir, to be like its godfather."

"And what name must I give it ?" inquired I. "Lancelot," answered she, after a long pause ; and I proceeded to christen the little atom, who began to wail and scream at his entrance into this troublesome world and the infliction of cold water.

After the concluding prayer he was put back into the bed beside his mother. "You have not given me the surname," said I, "and he must be registered. What am I to write ?"

—"Lancelot," repeated she. "Yes, but what is his other name?" There was another pause, and I caught only a low whisper. "He made me swear I would not tell." Her hand lay outside the bed: I looked at it, there was no ring there, "but it is hanging round my neck," she said, instantly detecting my glance, and making an effort to show me the chain. "For your child's sake you must give me the name," said I soothingly. "I will promise not to reveal it, if you choose, unless it were necessary."

There was no answer. "When you are gone, surely the babe should not be left nameless and fatherless," I said, as the child began to wail. "Hush!" said she almost angrily to it, "I must think;" then turning imperiously to me, "Pray for me," whispered she. I knelt down once more beside her, and uttered the collect for the first Sunday after Trinity, the first thing that occurred to me, "Forgiving us those things whereof our conscience is afraid," when two large tears came rolling down her cheeks, but she did not speak. Again I prayed that God would strengthen her heart at having thus to leave her child alone in this cold world, and again the two bitter tears overflowed.

There was a dead pause. I could hear the wind whistling in the casement. Her strength was evidently ebbing fast. "I *will* tell it," she said at last resolutely. "Stoop down—closer—nearer." I did so, but there was no answer. Then came a deep gasp. I looked again, but all was over. She had passed away.

It was very awful to me : there had not been a word or a thought, apparently, of that place to which she was going, or of that God whom she must so soon meet; and then I remembered the two silent tears, and her order to me to pray, and I thought of the loving Father who pitieth His children, and of the Saviour with whom there is no "too late," even for the penitent thief on the cross, and as I buried my head in my hands I rejoiced to think that God was not as man, and would not judge according to our shortened vision.

I was roused by a cry from the child, and by Mrs. Cloudesdale, who had just returned from downstairs. "And what maun I do wi' the little one?" said she sombrely. "A canna just be fashed like this with a mitherless bairn,—you be like his godfather sir, take him yersen." I jumped with horror. "What; a baby to feed and care for? you know I cannot do it."

A child's cry always appeals to a woman's heart, however stern, and by this time Mrs. Cloudesdale had lifted the living babe from the dead mother's side, and was looking at it more mercifully. "I'll tak tent to it, till so be as we can hear more from's friends and a'," said she, "for a while."

It seemed cruel to examine into secrets which had been kept so jealously, but I was obliged to inquire into the circumstances of the poor lady's arrival in that strange place.

"Was she a lady?" inquired I. "Nay, I think none; she were too free ordering folk about, and none too civil; quality has their whims, I've heerd, but they has their manners too," answered the shrewd old woman. [I am afraid this was a hit at me! She had not quite forgiven me for the "coil" I had made about his "enemies" at her husband's death; I was "quality" to her.]

She then told me all she knew; I honestly believe that there was nothing behind. Her husband had had a letter not long before his death from a cousin, a tradesman, in a great town south of the county, asking her to receive a lady who wished to be private up in the dales during her confinement; £50 would be paid down,

and £10 a month for the time of her stay, which would probably not be long. Mrs. Cloudesdale had been much "put about" at the idea, but times were bad, it was "a deal o' money," and she had ended by giving her consent. The cousin had brought his charge by coach to a small village inn on the high road, and thence up to a moorland "public," where he had arranged for a riding horse and a guide on to the Lathkill farm, while he himself returned, probably to avoid any inconvenient questions.

"Nothing of any kind had since been heard," she said, and she now brought the poor woman's little treasures out of the carved chest, seeming to know so accurately what they were and where they were to be found, that I felt sure it was not the first time they had been examined. There was nothing, however, amongst them which threw any light on the story—a torn letter with some directions as to the journey, a locket with some black and auburn hair twisted in it, and L. and M. on the back, with some little trinkets, were all that I found, with money enough for a couple more months.

I got up to go with a lingering look and prayer for the dead, who had passed so suddenly out of her troubles, her wrongs, and her difficulties, and

for the little spark of life she had left behind. Downstairs the "parket" and gin were laid out on a clean cloth of Mrs. Cloudesdale's own spinning. She would omit no one of the observances proper for a birth, but I had small heart for a feast. The moon was down, however, and it was pouring with rain, my mare was tired, it was between two and three in the morning, and I remained the rest of the night, lying half dozing on the hard, wooden settle by the fire, with a couple of pillows.

The next morning I was aroused by Mrs. Cloudesdale coming in with a packet in her hand. "It's come as soon as the breath is out of her body. How she were wearying and worrying arter it to be sure, and now when 'tis too late 'tis here. Boy as brought it said 't had been waiting days at 'The Leathern Bottle!'"

I felt as if it was a breach of confidence to look into it. "Let us bury it with her," said I. "If ye wonna open it I'll call in Andrew" (Mrs. Cloudesdale herself could not read). "The bairn shall know its own father, if I can compass it."

There was nothing in the letter, however, to help our search: it was very short, and evidently a reply to the poor woman's passionate complaints and remonstrances and threats of returning. The

writer entreated her not to imperil the welfare of all in order to be sooner acknowledged; he would bring her back as soon as possible, but everything was going wrong with him at that moment; he was in all sorts of troubles, and all for her sake. I thought it a selfish letter, almost hard under the circumstances. Some more money was, however, enclosed, so the care of the child was made more easy, but the cousin who enclosed the letter informed the Cloudesdales that he was going to live in London, and gave no fresh address.

I took the chance, however, and sent a note to him by the little messenger, saying that the mother was dead, and asking what was to be done with the child, signing it as the curate of the parish.

Nothing further, however, was heard from without, but the old woman took so fondly to the child that before he was two years old he had become a tyrant who ruled the whole house.

As he grew older he was frightfully spoilt by Mrs. Cloudesdale, whom he called granny, by her nephew, whom he dignified as uncle when he was good, and "Andrew" when he was naughty, by Elsie, now a tall, stout lass, and the hind—in spite of which he was a charming little imp, very handsome, strong, broad shouldered, with

curly auburn hair and dark blue eyes. He was a masterful young urchin, and before he was six years old would call upon me from afar to "light down" and let him have a ride on my mare.

I am afraid I obeyed his commands like the rest of his friends, but on one point I stood firm. I have not that idolatrous respect for the alphabet, which is now considered the parent of all virtue and all wisdom. I have known many clever men and women, ay, and wise too, particularly in those days, who could neither read nor write, and an infinite number of fools who could do both. An old French *émigré* (there were still some in England at that time) once told me that his aunt, the Marquise de ——— had only letters enough to follow her *livre d'heures*, "but she had read life, and had read men, and she was the wisest and wittiest woman and the best company I ever met with." Nevertheless, as I knew there was a superstition in the world to which I believed Lancelot belonged, and by which I felt sure he would one day be claimed, as to mastering the art of reading, even if it was seldom practised, I did my best to inculcate his letters, but without the smallest success. Lancelot was as sharp as a little needle: he knew almost as much about the birds,

beasts, and flowers of the district as I did myself, his perception of the character of the people with whom he lived, and of the best method of getting his way out of each of them, was of the shrewdest, but no puppy dog or little pig was more stupid and obstinate when it came to that wretched alphabet.

One day I came over at great inconvenience to myself to look after the child. Mrs. Cloudesdale always received me warmly, and appealed to me in any of her troubles. She was now busy in her great open fireplace, which stretched almost along one side of the room. On the low hearth were heaped great turves of peat, among which pots and pans of every size and sort, in one of which she baked (there was no oven), in another she boiled, in another she steamed potatoes. The flat girdle plate was on as soon as she saw me, and she began preparing fresh oat cakes in my favour, as big as a large washing-basin, and about the thickness and consistency of leather, but I was to the manner born, and liked the taste of the fresh oatmeal. Neither did I despise the barley bannocks, done upon the grid-iron, especially now that since the poor lady's advent Mrs. Cloudesdale had taken to the unheard-

of luxury of a little butter. Elsie, now a "farrantly wench," brought me her spinning and her pot-hooks to look at; the first, I am bound to say, much better than the second, but Lancelot could be persuaded to do absolutely nothing with his lessons. He lay on his back with his feet in the air, and, when I transferred him bodily to the corner, matters did not improve. Granny, however, at the moment, chiefly I believe in order to screen the criminal, here thrust a roll of papers into my hand, and begged me to help her.

Almost all these small ownerships are mortgaged up to the hilt. A few bad seasons reduces them almost to starvation: a landlord relaxes his rent in such a case, a money-lender never. He is always looking out for a chance of foreclosing. The Cloudesdales had been paying a good rent in interest, and now tried to cancel part with the money received for the child, but had been met by a demand for an increase of interest.

The little bundle of deeds she gave me was very curious. I am not clever in such matters, but I could read the kings' names in them, and the earliest was one belonging to a Cloudesdale in the reign of Henry VII. I mention it here only as a proof how these little statesmen went on, neither waxing nor

waning for hundreds of years, neither learning nor gaining anything from the lapse of time. The Cloudesdale whom I had known was probably an exact counterpart of his ancestor 300 years before.

I went back to the delinquent in the corner, but he had escaped to Elsie and her spinning-wheel, and I could do nothing with him.

At last at an end of my patience I rose up in wrath. "You are a bad boy, Lance ; I don't love you. Go away, I shan't speak to you again."

I hardened my heart against Granny's excuses and promises, and Elsie's apologies for crimes she had not committed. I went out and walked up the glen in search of an ivy-leaved campanula which I thought might grow there. Presently I heard a running footfall behind me, and felt a little hand steal into mine, but I was obdurate and took no notice. In a few minutes came a burst of tears like the bellow of a young bull calf. "*I will* be good ! *I will* learn my round O's !"

Perhaps it will be thought that I capitulated too soon. Lance had only promised amendment on the easiest of his trials ; but I am not a man of war, I loved the child, and was glad to make peace at any price. He was good company, though

he would not learn to read. We found the bell-flower and many other treasures together, particularly the nest of a mountain chat, in the rocks over the beautiful little waterfall at the head of the dale.

"There is only one egg in it; there will be two to-morrow," whispered Lance eagerly, creeping close while I held him tightly over the hanging bank. "You mustn't come here by yourself," said I, "it is very dangerous. I am sure the rock is loose just over the fall. I shall be back on Wednesday; mind you don't go near the place."

Wednesday was very stormy, but I somehow felt the strongest objection to giving up my visit. I don't like breaking a promise even to a child, and I fancied he might have got into mischief. The storm was near; a deep purple black cloud hung low over our heads, then came down the lightning, and the loud thunder seemed to reverberate among the great hills. "The voice of God," as the old Hebrew psalm calls it, mighty and awe-compelling in its reiterated peals; the lightning blared out in blinding sheets of flame, lighting up the glens, then came down the rain, almost like a waterspout, as I rode up at my mare's best speed in the torrent to the farm.

Mrs. Cloudesdale was standing out regardless of the rain, wringing her hands, and Elsie in a flood of tears behind. "He has gone home."—"What! Lance dead!"—"He maun ha' o'er-balanced himself reaching arter that wretched nest, and the rock give way, and fell with him. He maun ha' hit his head agin the stone; anyhow he were quite dead when we fun him, lying as smiling and quiet as in his bed," said she, with a burst of grief.

I was so thunderstruck that I could say nothing but "My little Lance! my little Lance!"

The nest had been too much for poor Lance's new-born virtue.

She led me upstairs with a sob that shook her stern old frame. The beautiful little body lay like a waxen image on the bed where I had seen his mother die. All that wealth of power and cleverness and heart still in the bud had passed away like the wind, and "the place thereof knew it no more." Had he passed away also from the temptations and the dangers which would have beset that tender and fierce nature? God fulfils Himself in many ways. As I rode away the storm had ceased, all was still, and the sweet scents of the mountain flowers were rising in the

quiet of the evening. The storm had come and gone, in our hearts and in the sky, seeming almost purposeless.

Little Lancelot's mystery died with him. In a few months I left the cure of the dales, but I know that nothing more was ever heard.

Years after I fancied that I had perhaps lighted on a clue, but it may have been only my own imagining. I was waiting for a coach in the smoking-room of an inn in our own county; the time for its arrival had long since passed, and there were rumours of an overset.

"Coach accidents are nasty things. I was in a bad one myself ten years ago," said a gentleman waiting as I was. I showed my interest—a fellow feeling makes one wondrous kind, and he went on: "It was not far from ——. The coach was going full gallop, to keep ahead of a rival known to be not far behind. The 'box-seat' went on encouraging the coachman to drive faster and faster, to my great annoyance. Presently, as we were swaying along full tilt, a sheep lept over the stone wall into the highway, the four horses swerved all across the road, over went the coach, and the passengers were all scattered in every direction. I was little hurt, and tried to do my best among the wounded. The

poor 'box-seat' was taken from under the débris, and we carried him into a neighbouring cottage, but he was quite dead. There was nothing either in his pockets or in the saddle-bags, which were his only luggage, to show who he was. He was tall and good-looking, unmistakably a gentleman, but there was no card or paper to be found, except a part of a letter (the large square sheet of those days) with the direction torn off, in a woman's hand, to 'Dearest L.', complaining, conjuring, remonstrating, threatening to leave this detestable place," with passionate phrases of affection, but almost fierce in its tone.

As he spoke, I felt as if I had once read an answer to a probably very similar epistle ten years back at the Lathkill. Was L. with his saddle-bags on his way up to the dales to right poor Mary's wrongs, or soothe her sufferings at least?

The passenger went on: "There was some sad story here, but none will ever know what it was. I went on by the next coach, but heard afterwards that the body had been carried to the neighbouring town. The news soon spread, and in due time a whole retinue of servants arrived from old Lord ——, to identify and bring away the body. The dead man was his sister's son, whom he in-

tended to have made heir to his unentailed property, which was very large.

There had been some fierce quarrel, however, between them about a foolish marriage, which the old man either tried to stop, or would not acknowledge, no one knew which. Whether they had ever been reconciled, or whether either had given way, no man ever knew."

No indeed! the woman, the child, and probably the man were dead! And so ended my glimpse.

"Brief as the lightning in the collied night,
That, in a spleen, unfolds both heaven and earth,
And ere a man hath power to say, 'Behold!'
The jaws of darkness do devour it up."

MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM.

THE END

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN



3 9015 01211 0329

**DO NOT REMOVE
OR
MUTILATE CARD**

